SEXING THE CITY:

LESBIAN AND GAY MUNICIPAL POLITICS 1979-87

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SUMMARY

This thesis explores the relationship between local government and social change strategies. More specifically, it examines the series of highly contested attempts during the 1980s to deploy local government in order to challenge the discrimination and prejudice facing lesbians and gay men. Whilst, much of the effort was directed at making council services more responsive to lesbian and gay needs, a key aspect of the project concerned the transformation of dominant sexual meanings.

Four questions provide a theoretical and empirical framework for this research. First, why did some local authorities address lesbian and gay issues? Second, how successful were they in doing so? Third, what factors constrained or limited their attempts? And fourth, why were lesbian and gay municipal initiatives so controversial?

The first section of this thesis examines the reconstitution of lesbian and gay issues on the local government agenda, and the subsequent trajectory of their development within particular authorities. The thesis then goes on to examine the impact of bureaucratic processes and right-wing opposition on lesbian and gay municipal discourses. I argue that despite significant opposition to lesbian and gay policies, in general the right did not mobilise. The ideological steer within local government bureaucracy was usually sufficient to `weed out` or dilute more progressive proposals. However, on occasions where this broke down, opposing forces intervened, both to obstruct lesbian and gay initiatives and to use the policies' existence to advance their own political agenda.

The final part of this thesis draws together several key issues: the general absence of a more radical sexual politics; the crisis of implementation; the nature of opponents' attitudes towards homosexuality and local government; and the decline of lesbian and gay municipal politics post-1987. In the conclusion, I return to the question of local government's radical potential by proposing an alternative, decentred approach to municipal sexual politics.

Methodologically, this thesis is eclectic drawing on several disciplinary areas in conjunction with a range of theoretical perspectives, particularly neo-marxism, feminism and post-structuralism. Field research comprises of interviews, mass media and local government documentation combined with my own experiences as an actor within the municipal lesbian and gay project.

This thesis is intended to make a contribution to a theoretical understanding of municipal politics, especially to the relationship between local government, sexuality, ideology and social change. It also offers a detailed account and analysis of lesbian and gay municipal developments, one of the most controversial initiatives of the 1980s.

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In appendix B, I have listed the people interviewed for this project. I am very grateful to them for their time, interest, ideas and experiences. This thesis could not have been written without their support. In this respect, I would also like to thank Maggie Turner of Manchester equal opportunities unit, the staff of Bristol women's unit, Chris Baker of the Association of London Authorities and Tamsin Wilton.

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ABBREVIATIONS.

AIDS - Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

ALA - the Association of London Authorities

AMA - Association of Metropolitan Authorities

CCT - Compulsory Competitive Tendering

CEO - Chief Education Officer

CHE - Campaign for Homosexual Equality

CLLR - Councillor

DES - Department of Education and Science

EA - Education (No. 2) Act 1986

EOP - Equal Opportunity Policies

GLC - Greater London Council

GLF - Gay Liberation Front

HBA - Haringey Black Action

IAP - Inner Area Programme

ILEA - Inner London Education Authority

LB - London Borough

LCGR - Labour Campaign for Gay Rights

LCLGR - Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights

LGIU - Local Government Information Unit

LGTG - London Gay Teenage Group

LLGC - London Lesbian and Gay Centre

LRFG - Leeds Revolutionary Feminist Group

MSC - Manpower Services Commission

MP - Member of Parliament

NALGO - National Association of Local Government Officers

NEC - National Executive Committee

NUT - National Union of Teachers

PI - Positive Images

PRG - Parents Rights Group

PWA - People with AIDS

S. 28 - Local Government Act 1988, S. 28 (to be inserted as S. 2A, Local Government Act 1986)

SWP - Socialist Workers Party

WLM - Women's Liberation Movement

CHAPTER ONE.

MUNICIPAL SEXUAL POLITICS: AN INTRODUCTION.

A. RE-EXAMINING THE LOCAL STATE.

By the mid-1980s, the label `loony left` had become the pejorative term used to describe a number of urban, Labour controlled councils across Britain. These were councils embarking on a wide range of new initiatives: nuclear free zones, decentralisation, alternative economic strategies and equal opportunity policies (EOPs). Anti-discriminatory and equal opportunity initiatives, which subsequently became standard for much of the country's public and private sector,[1] precipitated immense furore. Within the EOPs developed, few created as much controversy as the strategies and initiatives developed by a handful of councils for lesbians and gay men.

Municipal lesbian and gay work emerged at the intersection of several different processes - the growing size and confidence of Britain's lesbian and gay communities, the institutionalisation of the new urban left, and the developing influence of feminism within local politics. More particularly, the policies were precipitated by the work of lesbian and gay activists in the Labour Party, in local government employment and as elected council members. Yet, although this period, 1979 to 1987, witnessed a number of authorities formally extending

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[1] For a recent example of the extension of equal opportunity policies to a variety of institutions, see the Guardian, 21 November 1991, on the expansion of the Metropolitan police force's equal opportunity policies to include lesbian and gay officers.

equal opportunity statements to encompass lesbians and gays, few took such policies any further.

Amongst the handful that did, those councils best known for developing lesbian and gay work - establishing committees and in some instances employing staff with a specialist brief - include the Greater London Council (GLC), Southampton, Manchester, and Nottingham city councils, and the London boroughs of Camden, Haringey, Islington and Lambeth.[2] Lesbian and gay policies were not exclusively a London phenomenon; yet, as this list demonstrates, London councils predominated for reasons inextricably linked to the size, nature and politics of the capital's lesbian and gay communities, and of its Labour Party branches, particularly in gentrified, inner city areas.

In this thesis I explore the evolution of lesbian and gay initiatives in British local government as well as the conflict their development precipitated. The lesbian and gay municipal project is interesting for a number of reasons. Here I briefly consider two of them. First, progressive local government initiatives in this area contrasted sharply with the traditional relationship between the state and homosexuality. This latter tended to be both coercive and denigratory, deploying criminal law sanctions, social policy and ideological mechanisms to discourage both homo-sexual behaviour and a lesbian and gay identity. In contrast, progressive councils in the 1980s aimed, by developing lesbian and gay policies, to eradicate discrimination, reduce prejudice and in so doing validate and improve the quality of life for homosexuals.

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[2] See appendix A.

Second, municipal lesbian and gay policies, perceived as extreme and unusual, raise important questions about the state, in particular, the progressive potential of local government. To what extent, for example, could the local state have changed social practices, meanings and institutional behaviour? What constraints were placed upon its work? From where did these emerge? And to what extent could they be overcome? These issues are the crux of this thesis. Thus my discussion of the struggle surrounding lesbian and gay local government strategies is located within a broader problematic, that of the potential and limitations of local municipal politics.

However, questions as to the possibilities offered by local government can not be addressed a-historically. I have therefore chosen to focus on the period 1979 to 1987 - the key years of a modern, progressive, municipal sexual politics in Britain. The period also coincides with the first two terms of the Thatcher government, a key protagonist in the struggle over municipal radicalism. In the case of lesbian and gay policies, such conflict culminated with the introduction of the Local Government Act 1988, S. 28 which prohibited local authorities from promoting homosexuality. More generally, the period covered by these two terms in office represents a particular historical moment within the trajectory of local government and lesbian and gay politics.

Before going on to outline the theoretical framework of this thesis, I wish first to identify the ground it does not cover. Because of my focus on municipal activity, this thesis does not discuss the broad

range of lesbian and gay activism, for example, the campaigns for anti-discriminatory law reform, the intra-movement struggles over pornography and sado-masochism and the community organising around AIDS. It also does not deal explicitly with lesbian and gay politics in rural areas. As I have suggested above, lesbian and gay local government initiatives occurred principally in London and a few other major cities. Thus my examination is of highly urbanised localities and my conclusions need to be read within that context. Yet, even within Britain's major cities, lesbian and gay policy development was very uneven, largely absent in the sizeable conurbations of Leeds, Birmingham and Sheffield. Why a progressive sexual politics developed in some areas but not others is an interesting question that requires further research. Unfortunately, it is one I have been unable to explore.

I now wish to set out my theoretical framework and the motivation that led me to carry out this piece of research. I begin with the three main theoretical arenas within which this project is situated: the local state, ideology and sexual politics.

Within marxist and neo-marxist writing the term `local state` has been popularly deployed to designate local government.[3] Whilst it is sometimes unclear what else falls within its semantic parameters - do, for example, regional health authorities or local police committees qualify? - its use signifies a particular theoretical and political paradigm. In this thesis I remain with the terminology of `local

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[3] One of the best known and most influential books within this tradition is Cynthia Cockburn's (1977) The Local State.

government` since I do not discuss other local state institutions. However, my analysis has been informed by a neo-marxist local state agenda. Three aspects of this have been of particular significance: (i) local government's assumed role; (ii) its relationship to the state as a whole and to other social relations (the question of relative autonomy), and (iii) the potential of local government to function in a counter-hegemonic or oppositional manner.

In recent years, much local state theory has focused on the regulatory role of local government within late capitalism, examining such issues as the changing impact of central government policy and post-fordist developments.[4] Whilst economic theory and policy is relevant to this project, my principal focus is with the social, political and ideological.

Local government's relationship to these latter issues was explored by Saunders and others in the early 1980s. The `dual state thesis` that emerged was an attempt to consider the ways in which local government differed from central government at an organisational, functional, political and ideological level (P. Saunders, 1981a, 1984).[5] Their thesis was that whilst the central state was concerned with relations of production, local government's responsibility involved relations of consumption, in particular collective consumption (Saunders, 1981a).[6] Although Saunders (1984:31) developed a pluralist position on the

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[4] See R. Rhodes (1991:554); G. Stoker (1989).

[5] For criticisms of this thesis, see P. Dunleavy (1984); W. Magnusson (1985:112-5).

[6] See also M. Castells (1977:442).

question of local struggle, rejecting the more class-reductionist aspects of neo-marxist state theory, others grounded local government's emphasis on consumption in the need to reproduce a workforce (A. Cox et al., 1985:204-6). Municipal provision therefore encompassed those personal, familial and social needs deemed by the private sector as uneconomic to provide (M. Gottdiener, 1987:95-6, 98). Such involvement by the local state in social or collective consumption had, according to several marxist theorists, a number of serious political consequences. One was the diverting of people from realising and acting on their class identity. Alternate rifts, segmentations (and presumably alliances) were caused as people fought over the allocation and form of state-provided goods and services.[7]

Other writers have explored the ways in which local government distracted attention from relations of class struggle through the co-option of oppressed communities.[8] Miliband (1984:136), for example, discusses how the opportunities provided for working-class people to become councillors encouraged them to identify with status quo interests while at the same time legitimising local government as well as the state as a whole.[9] Yet, local government's contribution to the credibility and stability of the political system as well as its own political requirements frequently forced it into a balancing act, trying to respond to different interests in order to win their support,

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[7] See A. Cox et al. (1986:205-6); P. Saunders (1981b). Some have argued this creates new radical fissures (W. Magnusson, 1985:117).

[8] G. Clark and M. Dear (1984:137); C. Cockburn (1977:ch. 1); see also H. Maroney (1988:29) who uses a Gramscian analysis to reject approaches to the local state which reduce it to a process of co-option.

[9] See also P. Dunleavy (1984).

yet not going so far that opposition from other groupings would be precipitated.[10]

As will become clear, these considerations all have implications for the development of municipal lesbian and gay policies. Also relevant is the input of feminism to a theorisation of the state and local government. Marxist and socialist feminists have argued that the state, and in particular local government's remit, extends beyond the reproduction of a labour force to the reproduction of social relations more generally.[11] Through the exercise of state coercion, provision and ideology, dominant gender, class, sexual and racial relations are maintained.[12] For example, heterosexuality is affirmed and reproduced through traditional local government policies in the area of adoption and fostering, sex education curricula, library selections and cultural provision.

To what extent is it possible for local government to behave in an oppositional way; to affirm and support interests contrary to the status quo? Are lesbian and gay initiatives, for example, evidence of such a practice or do they simply represent particular councils' half-hearted efforts to maintain legitimacy, credibility and stability by appeasing one minor constituency?

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[10] See, on a similar point, S. Findlay (1987:33).

[11] See S. Franzway et al. (1989:ch. 2); P. Morgan (1981:18).

[12] See Z. Eisenstein (1984:ch. 4); M. Randall (1988:12). It has also been argued that the role of the state in relation to women is more complex and contradictory, see Z. Eisenstein (1988:ch. 1); S. Rowbotham (1989;150-1).

Within neo-marxist theory, two approaches have been central to explaining state practices that appear contrary to the maintenance of the status quo. The first focuses upon the concept of relative autonomy. By this is meant that local government is not directly determined by the state as a whole or by the economy or ruling class. Rather, local government has some discretion to act in favour of other class interests. Yet this is not deemed to represent a victory for other sectional groupings; rather it is depicted as a means by which the state through appeasement ensures the long term survival of the status quo (B. Jessop, 1985).

The neo-marxist theorisation of relative autonomy has provided a highly contested explanation of the relationship between the state (local and central), economic class and the social formation.[13] An obvious problem with it is that anything seen to be in the interests of subordinate groups can be argued to be a concession to maintain long-term legitimacy or stability. Whilst this latter may be an <u>effect</u> of such initiatives, it also may not be. Moreover, the very need for such compromise, one might argue, is both evidence of the strength of other sectional interests and a potential social benefit, unless it is suggested no real gains are possible outside a `truly` revolutionary situation.

Relative autonomy theory contains further problems which I mention here since their implications are significant for this thesis' approach towards power and the relationship between structure and agency. One

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[13] See the debate between N. Poulantzas and E. Laclau as discussed in P. Dunleavy and B. O'Leary (1987:ch. 6).

key limitation is relative autonomy's mono-deterministic emphasis. This is somewhat paradoxical perhaps, since the concept was developed by neo-marxists to move away from perceiving structures as epiphenomenal, entirely determined by the base or economy. Yet, within a neo-marxist framework, relative autonomy still implies that some relationship of power or social force is in the last instance determinative, and that an institution's autonomy exists to maintain the long-term interests of that class or social force. To what extent does this remain meaningful when one is dealing with a multi-faceted notion of power and determinacy? In such an instance, does the functionalist explanation relative autonomy provides remain of any value?[14]

Some theorists have taken a less class-oriented approach to relative autonomy by arguing it demonstrates the discretion local government possesses in relation to a myriad of external determinants, what Butcher et al. (1990:166) describes as `a bounded autonomy`.[15] That is, local government is seen as an arena within whose parameters choices can be freely made. Thus, a policy such as equality of opportunity for lesbians and gay men can be explained not simply as a short term expedient to maintain ruling class stability but as reflecting the

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[14] See Z. Eisenstein (1984:ch. 4) on the state's relative autonomy from patriarchy. The term has also been used to refer to local government's autonomy from central government; see J. Pierre (1990:39, 43); W. Magnusson (1985:125).

[15] H. Wolman and M. Goldsmith (1990) provide an alternative understanding of relative autonomy in the context of local government, by posing the question: does the presence and activity of local government have an independent impact on anything of importance? A similar approach has been adopted by M. Goldsmith (1990:31); see also the interpretation adopted by J. Pierre (1990:38) who argues local autonomy consists of the maximisation of local government powers and capacities. This approach seems to focus more on local government's determining power than on its ability to reach decisions free from the determining impact of other variables.

attitudes and wishes of particular local authorities which possess a modicum of freedom to pursue their own goals and objectives.

Such an analysis is useful in highlighting the variation within local government policy-making, whilst at the same time acknowledging the limitations of such diversity. It is nevertheless problematic in that it conceptualises an arena, albeit small, of local municipal autonomy. Thus, some limited decisions are perceived as free from exogenous considerations or influence. Rather they are the exclusive product of local government processes. Yet, I would argue this marginalises the extent to which <u>all</u> local government decisions are shaped or at least influenced by external forces and considerations,[16] as well as the difficulty in separating internal and external determinations. The composition of a local authority's membership and workforce; the considerations and issues before them; the criteria used to evaluate different options; all these apparently internal processes are inextricably linked to the local and national environment, as well as to the balance of power operating at both a micro and macro level.

Therefore, rather than seeing the development of lesbian and gay initiatives as an inevitable process of containment or, alternatively, as a product of limited freedom, they can be characterised as the unforetold, unpredictable outcome of a number of intersecting considerations and variables at a particular juncture. Yet, even within this analysis, one might argue that the historical moment of the mid-

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[16] See M. Goldsmith (1990:15-16) who focuses on the constraining nature of variables rather than their facilitative role and varied impact.

1980s witnessed structural limits to what was achievable. To what extent though could such constraints be overridden through the power of collective agency? That is, could actors faced by such restrictions and limitations make the choice to ignore or transcend them? I now come to another way of understanding municipal lesbian and gay developments: the result of local government's capture by oppositional forces.

At a theoretical level, the possibility of such seizure downplays the power of structural constraints since it suggests local government can be taken and then deployed in a counter-hegemonic manner. Instead, the power of collective actors, of agency, of struggle - the exploitation of contradiction - is emphasised. Although the composition of such a council membership would be shaped by its local political environment, the systemic logic of other considerations - financial, legal and electoral - would be evaded in order to fulfil specific ideological and political objectives. Yet in refusing, for example, to set a balanced budget or blatantly ignoring the concerns of the local electorate, the life of such a council would arguably be a short one (C. Cockburn, 1977:ch. 1).[17] Without the power to remove particular constraints, such as the legal regime under which local government operates, a fully oppositional council would survive only for as long as it took to re-establish the status quo in that municipal outpost.[18]

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[17] See R. Miliband (1984:138-9) where he discusses how infrequently such acts of defiance have occurred.

[18] Clearly if there had been a more general shift in the balance of power, the prior existing status quo would not necessarily be re-asserted. Whether the counter-hegemonic forces controlling a particular authority would be able to remain would depend on the over-all balance of power. However, even if they were `deposed`, it is likely oppositional forces within the authority would continue struggling in

The operation of this final process - the reassertion of dominant forces - is illustrated in chapter seven. There I discuss the establishment's hostile and coercive response towards Haringey council's pro-gay educational policy of `positive images`. Yet the rest of this thesis demonstrates the difficulties of even achieving that goal. Local government bureaucracy is not a neutral machinery that can be deployed in any direction. Moreover, there are huge pressures on council leaderships to moderate their goals and objectives.[19] It is not easy for oppositional forces to take control of a council, even more difficult for them to carry out their political commitments and, as I have suggested, near impossible to maintain control of the council on any long term basis if they do so.

In this thesis I explore the contradictory phenomena of lesbian and gay initiatives as both a means of maintaining legitimacy and stability[20] - less through relative autonomy than as a result of the structural, ideological and other imperatives operating - and as a symbol of particular councils' oppositional agenda. In the chapters that follow, I argue that these conflicting processes were closely entwined. Oppositional councillors and senior officers required stability and legitimacy in order to maintain the necessary control to develop policies which included lesbian and gay initiatives. At the same time, such processes were also in conflict inter se. Despite the

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different ways.

[19] See discussion on this point by R. Miliband (1984:139-145).

[20] See R. Barker's (1990:96) discussion of the function of legitimation and the state practices that fulfil it.

radical intentions of politicians, the drive for stability and legitimacy shaped the work and decisions of local authorities in such a way that lesbian and gay policies were fundamentally undermined as I discuss later on.

Having briefly examined some relevant aspects of local state theory, I wish to go on to consider the second problematic crucial to this thesis: the relationship between ideology and social change. In this thesis I address the questions of whether, and to what extent, local government can convey an oppositional ideology in the realms of sexual politics. I therefore first need to set out what I mean by ideology. This outline is a condensed version of a much longer discussion in chapter seven.[21]

By ideology, I refer to the various frameworks of meanings which justify, legitimise, promote and emerge out of particular networks of social relations. Since my analysis does not privilege any one social dynamic as being paramount, ideologies cannot have any necessary class belonging. There is no one ideology for the oppressors and another for the oppressed in part because individuals, on the basis of gender, race, labour, residency, sexuality, age and so on, do not occupy simple class positions. Relations of power are complex, and the articulations of meaning that reflect and constitute them are equally complex and contradictory. However, I would argue there are dominant ideologies, that is ideologies which are both generally accepted and which justify

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[21] For references and citations see chapter seven.

or promote existing unequal relations.[22] Similarly, there are oppositional ideologies which construct new forms of common sense, justify different choices, promote particular values, and contest or deconstruct facets of the status quo.

Two other points need to be made about ideology at this stage. First, I consider ideology to be both determined and determining. On the one hand, it is shaped by other aspects of society, and hence changes in response to a variety of social processes. For example, the increasing number of children born to lesbians through alternative insemination is likely to alter procreative and reproductive meanings, although due to the apparently oppositional nature of such a process, ideological change will be slow and intensely contested.[23] At the same time, ideology can be transformed from within its own terrain and such altered meanings in turn affect other social relations and practices. An example of the determining power of ideology can be seen in the increasing readiness of state bodies to improve their provision and treatment of lesbians and gays as a result of changing attitudes towards homosexuality.

Ideology is both constituted and communicated through specific systems of meanings, the most obvious being linguistic, although most aspects of social relations and practices are involved. In this thesis I use `texts` to refer to the <u>form</u> within which ideologies are being

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[22] See N. Abercrombie et al. (1980) for a repudiation of the notion of dominant ideology. Whilst, they make a number of useful points, I would argue their focus on economic class means they underestimate the hegemonic meanings that exist in relation to sexuality, gender and race.

[23] On lesbian reproduction, see D. Cooper and D. Herman (1992).

conveyed - the written, aural or visual substance, event or activity being analysed.[24] I use `discourse` to identify the means through which ideologies are experienced or read - that is the disciplinary or institutional, semantic framework. To take an example, in analysing a meeting, the event itself becomes the text - the `thing` to be analysed, while discourses are found in the relationship between the language, imagery and actions deployed within the text and particular categories of meaning. Ideology, in contrast, represents at the level of the `imaginary`, the relationship between articulations of meaning and relations of power.

The third theoretical area of this thesis - sexual politics - is a topic generally omitted from neo-marxist writing on the local state. Similarly, with one or two exceptions,[25] recent works on the new urban left and progressive government (local, regional and central) have also ignored initiatives in the area of sexuality. Since sexual politics is central to this project, let me briefly set out what I mean by it as well as my own approach to issues of sexual orientation.

The term sexual politics has been used in a number of ways, often as broadly coterminous with gender relations.[26] I give it in this thesis a narrower, more specific construction to indicate the articulation of

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[24] See K. Ferguson (1987:3) where she defines text, in contrast to a work, to mean a `methodological field` or `terrain of meaning`.

[25] See S. Franzway et al. (1989) for discussion on progressive state policy and sexual politics within an Australian context; for discussion on urban left and lesbian and gay policies, see S. Lansley et al. (1989).

[26] For example, see the definition given by K. Millett (1970:ch. 2).

gender relations with sexuality. My focus is therefore on the political nature of sexuality, in particular, how gendered relations of power are both played out and partially constituted within its arena.

The relationship between gender and sexuality is also mediated through other social dynamics - in particular, race, class and residency. Each of these relations of power will shape the particular conjunction of gender and sexuality as will issues of sexual orientation. My starting point is that there is no necessary connection between biological sex, gender and sexual orientation.[27] How these are in fact articulated together is a matter of cultural specificity.[28]

At the same time this thesis takes issue with those who treat sexual orientation as comprising a distinct and separate social relationship to that of gender. Current usage of the term `heterosexism` implies a distinct oppression on the basis of sexual orientation. This, I argue, is misleading. Homosexuality and heterosexuality are grounded in notions of gender and can have no meaning outside of them. Their construction and existence depend on the kinds of relations operating between men and women and on the ways in which masculinity and femininity are understood.

Linked to this tension over the relationship between sexual orientation and gender are tensions over the meaning of homosexuality

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[27] See J. Butler (1990:6-7) on the relationship between gender and sex and in connection with sexual orientation (23-7).

[28] Much has been written on the social construction of sexuality, see, for example, K. Birch (1980:91); J. D'Emilio (1983); F. Mort (1980:44); C. Vance (1989).

and heterosexuality. Modern theorists developing the work of Foucault have argued that the homosexual identity emanated from the late nineteenth century.[29] Prior to that period, it is claimed, people were not defined by their sexual orientation, and labels such as homosexuality referred instead to specific sexual practices. Whilst this analysis is important in affirming the social as opposed to the biological nature of sexual orientation as well as in stressing the importance of historical specificity, at the same time it privileges a definition of homosexuality grounded in the modern gay men's movement. Consequently, it ignores or marginalises other interpretations of homosexuality and particularly of lesbianism, which deploy the term differently, for example, to refer to political, emotional and cultural solidarity or connections between women.[30]

Such a definition, with its own political trajectory, in turn marginalises the significance of self-identity or sex.[31] Many of the radical feminists most closely identified with this approach saw sex as a minor or even irrelevant aspect of lesbianism which emerged as a complex response to gender inequality within patriarchal society. Thus women could be defined as lesbians within different cultures and

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[29] See the work of J. D'Emilio (1983:104); D. Gittins (1985:148); G. Kinsman (1987:107); J. Weeks (1989:72).

[30] See L. Faderman (1981); S. Harding (1991:250-1); S. Jeffreys (1990); A. Rich (1980).

[31] Political lesbianism in its different forms has come under much criticism. See for example I. Diamond and L. Quinby (1984:119-20) who argue that to see lesbians or any sexual identity as a challenge to prevailing power relations is to accept the very terms of the enterprise one seeks to defeat. This argument however seems to me to miss the alternative definition of lesbian being deployed, that it is not a sexual identity.

historical eras who would never have chosen the term for themselves and quite possibly did not engage in sexual relations with other women.

Yet despite competing definitions of homosexuality within lesbian and gay politics over the past two decades, such contestations interestingly, did not feature as a characteristic of municipal sexual politics. Rather, the homosexual definition was deemed unproblematic. Municipal actors, focusing on identity rather than politics or sexual practices, argued that `people were what they were` and `needed to be allowed to speak the truth about themselves`. Within this broad consensus the approach and perspective of different actors not surprisingly varied. Nevertheless, sympathetic municipal actors emphasis on identity and minority group status led to an approach that prioritised multi-culturalism and essentialism. This was played out most explicitly in the arguments over the Local Government Act 1988, S. 28, when opponents of the government's legislative agenda argued that homosexuality neither could nor should be promoted. In contrast, the dominant right-wing position was grounded in the claim that sexuality was not biologically determined but fluid and adaptable, an argument, paradoxically, which had in some ways more in common with a radical sexual politics than did liberal arguments of immutability and essential sexual orientations. According to the right, homosexuality was promotable and moreover was actually being promoted by local authorities `in the name of social revolution` (see chapter five).

In this thesis I attempt to address a number of different issues. While some are closely linked to the substantive material addressed - for example, why did lesbian and gay politics emerge onto the local

government agenda? - others are more abstract. Thus, I also explore the conflicts, negotiation and ideological dissonance within local government,[32] examining inter alia the fluid, discursively contested nature of policy and the relationship between structure, agency and struggle.

However, my principal thesis, whilst drawing on all these themes, is somewhat different. My argument is that more radical approaches to lesbian and gay work were in general unarticulated by actors working within the municipal process. Other progressive frameworks, initially evident, were largely organised out as a result of the policy-making process. Thus, by the time issues reached the formal decision-making committees only a weak liberal-pluralism remained. Yet, even the liberal-pluralism of the recommendations agreed there was barely put into operation. Attempts actually to implement lesbian and gay initiatives faced a crisis of extraordinary magnitude.

However, on several occasions this internal, bureaucratic process of containment broke down or else functioned less than effectively. In such instances, when more progressive policies were publicly able to surface, however transiently, external forces intervened, led by the right, but drawing in a myriad of different organisations, groupings and individuals. Thus, I argue that power operated even when explicit

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[32] By this I mean the great disparities of ideology and approach even <u>within</u> those councils developing lesbian and gay initiatives. Thus local authorities cannot be treated as a single, unified entity. Rather they are a sprawling mass of institutional arrangements (within which different actors are located), criss-crossed by power. For further discussion of the implications of this, see chapter eight.

conflict did not occur; and that such conflict only took place when other, more subtle mechanisms failed to work.

Why, though, was the mobilisation against municipal lesbian and gay policies when it did occur so intense? Why did more progressive municipal approaches to sexual politics often seem so inappropriate? Answering these questions requires an analysis of the relationship between local government, sexual politics and ideology.

Briefly, my argument is that within dominant ideology, local government was deemed to be principally a provider of services. Although Labour councils possessed sufficient flexibility to organise their affairs somewhat differently to Conservative authorities, at the same time quite definite boundaries existed. At an ideological level, reproducing status quo views and attitudes, identified as common sense, was not deemed political. However, going beyond this to articulate alternative perspectives was so considered, thus it was perceived to transgress expectations of local government's proper role and remit.

In this thesis I argue such attitudes were so deeply ingrained even amongst progressive people that few attempted to deploy municipal apparatuses to voice views judged illegitimate. Nevertheless, when this happened, as in the case of Haringey council's policy of `positive images`, it aroused a level of opposition not witnessed in the case of community, grass-roots campaigns advancing comparable proposals and arguments.

As a result of advancing lesbian and gay policies, local authorities such as Haringey temporarily lost some of their legitimacy as authoritative, hegemonic state organs. Instead they were treated by opponents as if they were equivalent to pressure groups within civil society. Yet such a partial loss of legitimacy was a temporary one. With the over-all balance of power within the state substantially unchanged, it did not take long for the status quo to be re-established.

Yet even within this transient, oppositional period, the degree of success councils achieved in effectively conveying progressive meanings was limited. For they were competing against other, arguably more convincing and forceful, communicators, such as central government and the tabloid press. However, despite such limitations, as I argue in this thesis, local government did impact upon ideologies of homosexuality, in both positive and negative ways.

In the conclusion I tentatively suggest ways in which a dialogue around sexual politics might have been conducted more successfully, thus enabling lesbian and gay policies to achieve a more favourable outcome. I advocate a decentred strategy which recognises the various, multiple interstices of municipal practice within which sexual politics takes place. Thus, it is not principally a matter of conveying the `right` attitudes from the centre, but facilitating processes of change wherever they may occur. As well as practical changes, this requires reconceptualising local government, away from the top-down, centre-periphery model, to one that recognises the different relations of

power, resources and potential that exist across the terrain municipal government occupies.

Having set out the main argument of this thesis, I wish briefly to outline the content of each chapter. The second half of chapter one deals with various methodological questions raised by this research. In chapter two I go on to examine the history of how lesbian and gay policies emerged onto the local government agenda in the early 1980s, focusing in particular on the activity of key actors, whilst explicating the trends and structural changes which made their activity possible. Subsequently, in chapter three, I explore in some detail the work of three local authorities which developed lesbian and gay initiatives: the London Borough (LB) of Islington, Nottingham City Council and LB Camden. Focusing on the different conflicts and tensions that emerged, I examine the development of municipal structures, employment policies, service provision, community development and campaigning over the period covered by this thesis. A key theme of this chapter concerns the similarities between the different councils in question, an analysis which facilitates chapter four.

There, I explore the ways in which more progressive approaches to sexual politics were organised out during the policy-implementation process of municipal lesbian and gay initiatives. I argue that despite the limitations on initial proposals for pieces of work, such suggestions were considerably more progressive than the policy decisions made at committee, and much more far-reaching than the ways in which projects or proposals were actually implemented or operationalised. Thus, by focusing on the relationship between

bureaucracy, discourse and ideology, I explore the means by which municipal process facilitated a mobilisation of bias.

Chapter five continues this discussion by considering what happens when the mobilisation of bias becomes temporarily fractured. Here, I carry out a case study of Haringey council's educational policy of `positive images`. My focus is the emergence and mobilisation of opposition to lesbian and gay work as a result of a freak incident - the sending of a letter from the lesbian and gay unit to head teachers informing them of the council's lesbian and gay educational policy and the need to develop appropriate work in schools. This took place prior to the formal emergence of specific policy within the education department and occurred moreover without the knowledge of that department, a contravention of municipal decision-making processes and precedents.

Chapter six develops this discussion by examining the role of the mass media in the discursive and political struggle that took place. I argue here that the mass media was not a neutral or non-partisan conveyor of information or ideas. Rather, through close textual analysis I demonstrate some of the ways in which a particular ideological steer was evident. At the same time I argue that the mass media's claims to objectivity or, in the case of the tabloid press, their use of story telling and narrative imagery facilitated the right's interpretation of events and hence their political position.

Finally, in chapter seven, I bring the different strands of this thesis together. At a more abstract level, I consider why the steer

against a more radical sexual politics occurred, why implementation of lesbian and gay work proved almost impossible despite the promises and paper commitments of municipal politicians and officials, and why opposition was so extensive. Lastly, I consider the future of lesbian and gay work. This theme is continued into chapter eight, the conclusion of this thesis, which briefly explores the potential of local government to convey and operationalise a radical sexual politics.

B. TEXTUALITY AND PARTICIPANT STATUS.

My study of municipal lesbian and gay initiatives emerged for several reasons. In part it was due to an ongoing political and theoretical concern with the potential of the local state to facilitate or bring about progressive social change. But, more than that, it arose as a result of my own experiences as a member of Haringey council between 1986 and 1990. Later in this section, I discuss some of the issues arising from my insider status. Here, I wish to focus on the analytical implications of my position.

Being an actor within local government informs this thesis in a number of ways. First, it provided me with an opportunity to experience the contradictions, and competing pressures and tensions of working within the local state. On the one hand, I was part of an innovative, left-wing local authority; on the other, particularly as financial reductions started to bite, I had to come to terms with my participation in an organisation that would only go so far to introduce a radical agenda when budgetary, legislative and electoral demands were

pulling in a contrary direction. The decisions I took, remaining a committee chair and thus formally part of the front bench, whilst refusing to implement, and indeed opposing, financial cutbacks and restrictive legislation, provide a personal context to my analysis of the choices and options facing actors in this thesis. I left local government in 1990, conscious of and still optimistic about the progressive possibilities it offered even during a period of retrenchment, but at the same time more bitterly aware of the limitations and immense difficulty in achieving such potential. Every step was part of an unrelenting struggle which politicised those involved in the conflict far more than anyone else. I return to the implications of this in chapter eight.

As well as my general participation in municipal politics through being a councillor, I was also particularly active in the development of a progressive, local government sexual politics. My involvement stemmed partly from chairing the Women's Committee (1988-90) and acting as vice-chair of the Lesbian and Gay Sub-Committee (1986-88), but also through membership of community organisations such as Positive Images.[33] My own experiences of attempting to develop pro-lesbian and gay policies raised a number of questions: should such initiatives be developed by the local state? If so, what were the implications? Were policies, for example, being diluted? To what extent was this inevitable? If things had been done differently, could a more radical

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[33] Positive Images was a progressive community based campaign established in 1986 to ensure Haringey council did not back-track on its lesbian and gay policies and to try and build local support for such initiatives. See chapter five for further discussion.

sexual politics have been articulated, and, even more problematically, operationalised?[34]

This last inquiry provided the specific impetus for this project. For it was a question located at the heart of the tension between liberal pluralist practice and neo-marxist theorising. By this I mean that, on the one hand, we, as left-wing councillors, were acting as if anything was possible given sufficient support and political commitment; on the other hand, for many of us, our theoretical framework not only undermined such optimism but challenged the very notion that lasting, `real` change could be brought about in this manner.

In this thesis, I draw on several different qualitative methodological traditions, principally in the fields of political science, cultural theory and organisational studies. Young (1990:10) has described a similar methodological approach as `synergistic`, claiming the combined effort of different disciplines is greater than their individual application. Here I wish briefly to discuss my methodological structure, sources and some key problems and issues that arose during the four years of this project.

Categorising methods within a disciplinary framework is in many ways an unhappy strategy, since in any given field, such as, for example, political science, various approaches can be and have been taken. Nevertheless, within such disciplinary discourses, there are frequently

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[34] In chapter seven I question the dichotomy set up between `articulation` and `operationalisation`. Particularly in the case of ideological initiatives, the two processes are closely intertwined.

dominant paradigms. In political science, it has tended to be positivism,[35] epitomised by quantitative research and rational choice or games theory (I. McLean, 1991). Cultural theory, on the other hand, has veered towards a more open-ended approach to the validation of knowledge, emphasising interpretation rather than the seeking of truth. Since this latter epistemological method is closer to the approach adopted in this research, the discussion below focuses on cultural theory and some of the methodological problems raised by its application in this area of work.

Since one key theme of this thesis is local government as a communicator, a conveyor of oppositional ideas and concepts, I sought to compare it with more conventional mass communicators, such as television and the press.[36] A question this research raises is whether local government can hold its own in this field. Can it produce texts that are influential, widely disseminated, and which possess sufficient closure to limit readings against the grain at both an analytical and evaluative level? Yet to what extent does this depend on the particular ideologies and meanings being conveyed? Is local government, for instance, more able to convey liberal-pluralist knowledge than radical interpretations or ideas? I consider these questions in some detail in the second half of this thesis. However, my research in this area has been limited by the lack of relevant audience surveys. My analysis of interpretations of lesbian and gay policies is therefore restricted to

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[35] See R. Rhodes (1991:551); J. Wolfe (1991:237-8).

[36] Although local government is not conventionally thought of in this way, in some respects it is more of a communicator than television or the press, since there is a greater exchange of meanings which is both collective and interactive. See for discussion of this point in relation to the mass media, I. Ang (1991:18).

the textual readings and perceptions of community activists, council officers, the media, right wing actors and myself during this period.

In this thesis I make use of textual analysis to reveal the play of meaning within documentation and symbolic actions, and to draw attention to interpretive diversity, particularly between constructors and recipients of texts. Nevertheless, textual analysis may also cause difficulties. Traditionally used to deconstruct and examine the meaning within books, plays, films and television programmes, it is a method that works best, I would suggest, when that which is under consideration is a discrete, definable entity.

This is, I appreciate, a highly controversial poirt. Drawing on the work of Barthes and others, a number of cultural theorists have argued that mass media texts cannot be treated as discrete or separate entities (D. Morley, 1989). Their meaning can only be known or constructed through a process of intertextuality, which recognises the interdependency of meaning between one text and another. Whilst I fully accept that meaning cannot be found within a single play or book but rather depends on the context - the process of `differance`, the articulation of signifiers and signified with other elements in other works - at the same time, novels, plays, films and television programmes are easier to handle as texts than the much more diffused nature of political struggle or the policy-making process.

Council policies are fluid and ever changing. They lack consensual definition not only as to what they mean, but also as to what they are, that is what they include and exclude. Local government policy-making

is the result of ongoing interaction and feedback. There is rarely a finished product, although artificial boundaries can be placed on the process to delineate a particular time period which can then be analysed. Arguably, this is also true for plays or films, where reviews, serials and `readers'` comments dissolve the notion of a static, unified text. However, there still tends to be a central text - or what Barthes and Ferguson describe as a work - that can be distinguished from the broader play of meaning or `textuality` (J. Fiske, 1989). In using textual analysis to deconstruct local government policy-making, there is a risk of losing the fluidity, struggle and interaction that comprise local government activity. Freezing the operation of policy may be useful as a means of analysing what is happening, but it needs to be remembered that the process is a tactical one.

Comparable problems apply to analyses of discursive struggles which treat each side simply as producers and consumers of `texts`. Forces on the right and left do not wait at their collective home bases for their opponents' missives whiling away the time producing their own. Conflict is less organised, less conscious and less contained. In addition, whilst it is possible to use textual analysis to interpret more amorphous texts, such as demonstrations and grass-roots political activity, and indeed this is something I attempt to do, there is a danger that emphasis on discourse and meaning can marginalise the more material[37] side of the dialectic.

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[37] By `material` I mean those physical changes which interact with ideology to produce meaning. See J. Flax (1987:632) where she makes a similar point.

My application of textual analysis with its attendant problems has been carried out in conjunction with methods derived from organisational studies. Because of the nature of my subject matter, local government, I have relied heavily, particularly in the first half of the thesis, on council documentation - reports, minutes, memos, correspondence - and semi-structured interviews. My choice of interviewees reflects the role played by primary sources more generally in this research: to `re-construct` past events and to provide a plurality of interpretations of the municipal process.

Engaged in a multi-site study of approximately six authorities, I interviewed between five and seven people from each council examined. These included councillors (front-bench and back-bench), community representatives, lesbian and gay specialist officers and several other senior officers who had some involvement with lesbian and gay policies.[38] The majority of interviews were one-shot, tape recorded, between one and two hours in length and face to face, although several shorter telephone interviews were also carried out as were a few repeat interviews over a two year time-span. Of those interviewed, the vast majority were between 30 and 45 years old, largely white, approximately two-thirds were lesbian or gay, and just over half were women. Such a profile is, I would suggest, fairly representative of the actors involved in developing lesbian and gay initiatives.

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[38] An omission has been the interviewing of front-line workers. This occurred for two primary reasons. First, as a result of my focus on actors involved in the formal policy-making/implementation process; secondly, because it would have proved very difficult to either interview a representative sample or to choose key individuals within such a vast employee group.

One difficulty I experienced, largely due to the historical nature of this project, concerned the discrepancies between interviewee recollections and bureaucratic data. I have relied on interviews for interpretations of the policy-making process and for personal perceptions of past events, but have used committee reports and minutes to fill in many of the details. This is, however, problematic since bureaucratic documentation provides a very partial picture. Minutes, in particular, often do not reflect the final decisions made as these frequently took place outside of the committee forum. Minutes also have a tendency only to record certain more authoritative or formal contributions, such as the chair's summing up - although this varies between authorities. Few describe conflict between committee members or the strength with which opinions are held. It is difficult therefore to infer from such documentation which decisions were considered important or crucial and were the result of long debate, and which were considered insignificant by participants and agreed formally without any debate at all. Minutes are, thus, as much an interpretive strategy as the more ostensibly partisan comments of municipal actors.

Such issues are significant to my thesis since it attempts both to interpret the decision-making process and to offer a narrative of events and developments in the various authorities studied. It is possible therefore that despite my use of a variety of different sources and materials, my interpretation is based on insufficient information. One difficulty is that, five years or more on, few people can recall the detail or impact of most policy decisions.

I have outlined above my involvement in local government's development of lesbian and gay initiatives. Many of the events described in this thesis are events I took part in and much of my analysis has been informed by this close, personal participation. I see this as something which has both advantages and disadvantages. Before briefly discussing them, I wish to outline how I have dealt with my own involvement throughout the rest of this project.

In general I have chosen not to draw attention to my own participation, other than by occasional footnotes principally to items of personal information. This is an approach at odds with much feminist methodology which emphasises the importance of a feminist researcher achieving parity with her `subjects` by locating herself within her own study as much as possible[39]. At a basic level, this is what I intend to achieve with this introduction, however I have not taken it further. In part this is due to the nature of my study. Unlike many feminist research projects which examine women as clients, patients, mothers, housewives, that is as potentially disempowered (A. Oakley, 1981), this study is principally a study of key actors within a relatively elite process - local government decision-making. Thus being a subject of this project has different implications; it is less a process of objectification than of recognition of particular individuals' contribution. Therefore, arguably, including oneself would not necessarily have the effect intended.

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[39] See V. Randall (1991) for a discussion of feminist method; see also H. Roberts (ed.) (1981); L. Stanley (ed.) (1990).

Yet because my approach as a councillor in dealing with lesbian and gay issues diverged from the dominant municipal strategy of progressive authorities, I considered actually tackling this, in particular the marginalisation such a perspective received, even when coming from an actor with supposed power The illusory nature of such power is a theme maintained throughout this thesis. Perhaps, it would have been better developed had I placed myself more explicitly within the text. Yet partly for the reason stated above I have not done so, as well as out of an awkwardness in deciding how to do so properly, and out of a desire to achieve a degree of distance or detachment from the project.

Such a detachment is however ambivalent. On the one hand, I wish to examine events and test theories as an outsider sifting material and arguments.[40] On the other hand, I neither can nor wish entirely to distance the project from my own politically-informed concerns. I mentioned above that I have not located myself specifically within the text, nevertheless, the voice of myself as a participant comes through at many points, despite any endeavours that it should not. It is hard, if not impossible to erase one's own personal location in a particular project.[41] Within this thesis, I am situated as councillor, policy-maker, manager, community activist, college/school governor and researcher. Each position provides a different perspective, set of

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[40] See for a critique of this approach, C. Greed (1990). See also from a more traditional position, A. Bryman (1989:165), who stresses the problem of researchers becoming too involved and linked with their subjects' perspectives.

[41] Geographical location is also significant. My involvement has principally been in London and more particularly in Haringey politics. Undoubtedly this has influenced my outlook although I have tried not to use Haringey as the paradigm against which all other councils are compared.

concerns and interests. Hopefully, they render the work more interesting. Yet, at the same time, I am conscious that they may simply generate confusion: where is the writer coming from? To whom is she speaking? For my own segmented location means also that I want this project to speak to people with their own myriad of diverse concerns.

At a more practical level, my insider status has affected my access to documentation and to interviewees. I wish here to consider the implications regarding the latter. In this thesis I have undertaken approximately forty interviews with councillors, officers, community activists and other participants. Whilst personal connections were undoubtedly helpful in obtaining some interviews,[42] it also caused difficulties. First, I was unable to secure any interviews with right-wing actors in Haringey, with the exception of one friendly Conservative councillor. None of the other opponents of `positive images` that I wrote to (approximately five) replied. This contrasts with a fairly high level of response from other participants - in the region of ninety per cent. One possible explanation is that such actors did not want to be interviewed by anyone regarding their involvement in the struggle over `positive images`. However, I know that other people who contacted these actors for their own research received a much higher level of response. I therefore conclude that such actors'

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[42] About half the actors interviewed were people I knew personally on a political, professional or social basis and a number of the others I made contact with through people I knew. In all cases I made direct contact with named people with whom I wished to speak, rather than relying on the selection of senior management.

knowledge of my own involvement and position was a major reason why they would not agree to be interviewed.[43]

Knowledge of my politics did not only affect access to interviewees, it also affected the quality and nature of interviews actually carried out. Particularly in Haringey, most interviewees were too aware (or thought they were aware) of my own position on the issues discussed. Whilst it is hard to quantify the effect of this, I would expect it influenced some of the answers and responses given. Finally, although few of the interviews were carried out in the context of ongoing work relationships, in some cases respondents may have felt that there were professional implications to information given; that is, irrespective of my own sense of integrity, I was not sufficiently outside the bureaucratic process for interviewees to feel confident that information and ideas divulged would not backfire against them.

Yet despite the drawbacks of carrying out research with insider status, overall I would argue that participation in the process studied has given me insights and perspectives I would not otherwise have acquired. Within the context of participant observation (A. Bryman, 1989:42-7), my position meant I partook of some of the advantages identified with covert research. For example, I could observe events without being identified as a researcher and therefore without that status actually impacting upon people's behaviour and decisions. At the same time, I did not experience the drawbacks of covert research, that is not being able to interview participants and the various ethical

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[43] See J. Pettigrew (1981:67), where she discusses the problems of interviewing opposing Sikh factions in Punjab to the family into which she had married.

dilemmas that often confront such researchers. A number of the people I worked with knew I was doing a doctorate on local government which I commenced in the third year of my term of office. However, my sense is such research was seen as entirely peripheral to my role as councillor and committee chair.

Being a participant with formal status facilitated my privileged access to certain documents. Moreover, my role as a municipal actor with known politics meant undoubtedly that some people interviewed were more open and revealing than they might otherwise have been with a stranger or with someone whose politics they did not know. Thus the question of trust and confidence works both ways. More was at stake in interviews, particularly those with Haringey actors, since I was also an actor in the same process, yet at the same time, less was at stake. Despite being structured, many of the interviews resembled ongoing conversations I had held with the same people at other times. The difference was one, perhaps, of depth not substance.

Since leaving the arena of local government, it has become of particular importance that this thesis says something of relevance and use to those still directly involved in developing lesbian and gay council initiatives.[44] Whilst the bulk of this work provides an analysis of past events, I nevertheless hope such a history will provide pointers to future possibilities, strategies to avoid and obstacles to be overcome. In chapter eight I return to this issue more directly, by

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[44] See the emphasis in organisational research on understanding and improving organisational effectiveness and performance, A. Bryman (1989:5, 233-9).

suggesting an approach a future municipal sexual politics might encompass.

CHAPTER TWO.

OFF THE BANNER AND ONTO THE AGENDA:

THE EMERGENCE OF A NEW MUNICIPAL SEXUAL POLITICS, 1979-86.

A. INTRODUCTION.

> ``Domestic life` and `the quality of human relationships` are emerging from the silent secrecy of `the private` to enter the public world of town hall committees.` (L. Segal, 1987:224)

In varying, historically contingent ways, local authorities have always engaged with the private domain. Whilst municipal sexual politics became explicit and self-conscious in the 1980s, provision of previous periods - social and education services as well as `wash-houses and council housing`[1] - relied on and helped affirm a sexual division of labour, nuclear family structure and heterosexual hegemony. Thus, despite claims to the contrary,[2] homosexuality was not simply ignored by local government prior to progressive developments in the 1980s. Moreover, beyond local government's participation in reproducing patriarchal social structures, values and social relations, in the 1970s examples abound of explicit discrimination against lesbians and

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[1] E. Wilson with A. Weir (1984:129).

[2] Ibid; see also L. Segal (1987:224).

gays,[3] often by authorities who a decade later were branded as `loony left`.[4]

Within this context of ongoing oppression, discrimination and marginalisation, certain Labour authorities in the early to mid-1980s, began to formulate positive lesbian and gay policies.[5] What was unusual about such policies and initiatives was not that they addressed

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[3] The following are examples of municipal discrimination against lesbians and gay men. In 1974, a gay teacher was banned from employment by the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) for refusing to promise not to discuss homosexuality with pupils outside structured sex education classes (Gay Left, 1975, no. 1). Rotherham council in the early 1970s turned down applications by a local Campaign for Homosexual Equality (CHE) group to hire rooms for a gay disco (T. Sanderson, 1988:89). During the same period, Scarborough, Bradford, Bournemouth and Preston City Councils refused to let CHE hold their annual conference within municipal halls (Rights of gay men and women, Labour Party, 1981:8), while in the late 1970s, Clwyd and Norfolk County Councils refused to employ lesbians and gays in jobs involving responsibility for children (ibid:7).

Into the 1980s similar policies continued. A four year battle was fought to get the free publication, Gay News, into Croydon reference library (Sappho, 1981, vol. 8, no. 10). In 1981, Barking, a Labour controlled local authority, sacked a care assistant in a girls' residential home on the grounds of her lesbianism (Sappho, ibid). In Staffordshire, Conservative District Council leader, Bill Brownhill, suggested (December 1986) that 90% of lesbians and gay men be gassed as a cure for AIDS (ALA Lesbian and Gay Committee, Agenda, item 8, 17 March 1987). His call for repeal of the Sexual Offences Act, 1967, was supported by the council's Labour leader, Jack Greenaway (ibid).

[4] Other authorities were also branded as `loony left` that did not develop lesbian and gay policies.

[5] Most lesbian and gay equality work was introduced by Labour administrations. Indeed in both LB Ealing and Nottingham City Council, the election of Conservative council leaderships signalled the end of such policy development. The differential response of Labour and Conservative councils illustrated differing interpretations of the problem. Whilst left-wing Labour authorities perceived the problem as discrimination and prejudice, for Conservative authorities, the problem was lesbians and gay men themselves. See for more general discussion on this point, M. Edelman (1988:ch. 2).

homosexuality. Rather, the innovation of the 1980s was that councils for the first time treated homosexuality in a manner that challenged its previous status as unnatural and undesirable.

Yet despite the outrage lesbian and gay municipal initiatives provoked,[6] they remained throughout the 1980s a relatively marginal aspect of local government activity. A study by the Association of Metropolitan Authorities (AMA), The Organisation and Management of Equality Policies (1988), questioned member authorities on their work.[7] All fifty-three respondents had or were developing equal opportunity policies (EOPs). Twenty-six had policy statements which included reference to sexuality or lesbians and gays. However only a handful had established specialist committees and officers for lesbian and gay equality work.[8]

In this chapter I examine the process by which lesbian and gay issues were reconstituted on the local government agenda. First, I consider the changing environment of local government in the late 1970s to early 1980s, in particular the emergence of new urban left authorities. Second, I examine the lesbian and gay movement - the shift from extra-state to local government-oriented strategies - between 1970

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[6] See chapters five to seven for further discussion on the opposition to municipal lesbian and gay policies.

[7] The AMA consists of London boroughs, metropolitan districts and joint boards. It does not include non-metropolitan districts or county councils. The response rate to the survey was 60%.

[8] See appendix A of this thesis. This compares with more than twelve women's committees/working parties and race relations committees/working parties (AMA, 1988:5). Over sixteen authorities employed specialist women's officers and over twenty-five authorities, officers on race (AMA, 1988:8). See also S. Brownhill and S. Halford (1990:399).

and 1986. Third, I consider the role of various actors in achieving a place for lesbian and gay issues on the municipal agenda: (i) the Labour Party; (ii) community activists; and (iii) local government officers. Finally, I examine the early responses of Labour controlled left-wing councils, in particular the GLC, to lesbian and gay issues.

B. THE CHANGING SHAPE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT.

1. The emergence of the urban, municipal left.

The history of the emergence in Britain of the new urban left has been well documented by Boddy and Fudge (eds) (1984), Gyford (1985), Lansley et al. (1989) and others. I will therefore review briefly existing research on the changing urban, political climate of the late 1970s and early 1980s. For this begins to explain not only why local authorities began to reconsider lesbian and gay issues, but also why lesbians and gays began to reconsider local government.

From the mid-1970s, the character of many urban, Labour-controlled local authorities began to change.[9] In 1981, a new left-wing leadership was installed in the Greater London Council (GLC). Local elections the following year witnessed a similar process in a number of other London authorities such as Islington and Camden.[10] New councillors joined councils committed to the implementation of progressive,

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[9] It is important to note however that many urban Labour authorities remained outside (and often hostile to) the new municipal socialism. These included Glasgow, Cardiff and Birmingham.

[10] See generally D. and M. Kogan (1983:ch. 9).

democratically-drawn up manifestos. In Manchester, Sheffield and elsewhere, traditional Labour leaderships were replaced.

The emergence in local government of a new, urban left was the result of several interconnected processes (J. Gyford, 1985:ch. 2): the changing composition of the Labour Party, local government restructuring with modifications to its workforce profile, the development and influence of neo-marxist theory and the impact of the post-1979 Thatcher government. I discuss these briefly in turn.

From the mid to late 1970s, the membership of the Labour Party, particularly in London began to change, due to an influx of feminists and other progressives[11] with a background in the voluntary sector,[12] community politics and new social movements.[13] In particular, many of the women who joined came with an understanding of sexual politics (a point I return to later) and a history of activism in grass-roots campaigns around such issues as child-care and housing - front-line interaction with the local state (C. Cockburn, 1977).[14] Amongst those who joined out of disillusionment with Fourth International parties, they brought into the Labour Party a familiarity with marxism, an

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[11] See K. Harriss (1989:39-40); D. and M. Kogan (1983:ch. 10); L. Segal (1987:ch. 2).

[12] Interview with Linda Bellos. For details of interviewees, see appendix B.

[13] For example, the women's movement, peace movement, Black politics, urban politics, anti-poverty work and so on.

[14] See also L. Bondi and L. Peake (1988); C. Cockburn (1977); S. Perrigo (1986); V. Randall (1982:ch.5). This contrasted with the position and activities of much of the male left during the early 1970s who dismissed local government as a politically irrelevant apparatus; S. Lansley et al. (1989:1).

interest in theoretical development, and a commitment to far-reaching social change. Journals, such as Chartist, which later expounded the Labour Party `soft-left's` municipal agenda, had their background in the Trotskyist politics of the 1970s.[15]

This decade which preceded the emergence of `urban socialism` saw the general development and diffusion of neo-marxist theory and politics. Whilst many of these ideas grew out of political experience, changing theoretical perspectives also had an impact on the direction of subsequent activism. The work of Gramsci, Althusser and Poulantzas in particular became highly influential in shaping left-wing concerns.[16] The need to construct a counter-hegemony, to exploit the contradictions within the state rather than to simply overthrow it characterised thinkers of the new urban left. Neo-marxist ideas, with their critique of class reductionism and their interest in culture and ideology, supported the increasing political significance of feminism and new social movements.[17] Urban theorists drawing on this work began to explore the potential of local government as a site of contradiction and as a focus for constructing an oppositional hegemony.

But it was not only a new theoretical politics that was significant in the development of the municipal left. The welfare state of the

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[15] See discussion with Chartist members.

[16] Clearly only a minority of people were familiar with the actual work of these theorists. Their ideas however were more widely known and developed in other work more closely related to the conditions of British politics.

[17] This point should not be over-stated. Neo-marxism still tended to maintain the primacy of the economic sphere and of economic class struggle.

post-war era had produced a new middle-class. Occupational, financial and ideological reasons led many, particularly in London, to settle in inner-city areas. Joining the Labour Party in traditionally working-class wards, they slowly exerted an increasing influence on the politics and organisational style of local parties (J. Gyford, 1985:22). Gordon and Whiteley (1979) argue this led to a shift away from issues of class towards a more middle-class, identity politics.[18] However, I would question the extent to which this happened. Whilst equal opportunities, international concerns and cultural politics did become more significant, perusal of Labour left journals such as London Labour Briefing and Chartist shows traditional class politics retained much of its priority.

A third important factor in explaining the changing composition of many urban authorities was the reorganisation of local government during this period (J. Gyford, 1985:ch. 2). Elcock (1981) describes how, as a result, across Britain traditional oligarchies were overturned. More `intellectual`, policy-oriented Labour councillors began to be elected. Within the workforce, new programmes, such as the community development initiatives of the 1970s, brought different people into municipal employment. This change is important to understanding the initiation of lesbian and gay council policies, since much of the latter's impetus came from council staff. Despite the drawbacks and limitations of community development programmes,[19] the officers appointed deployed a significantly different model of council-

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[18] See also J. Gyford (1985:22).

[19] For discussion and critiques of community development programmes, see S. Barrett and M. Hill (1986:40); C. Cockburn (1977:ch. 2, 4).

community relations than did the traditional bureaucracy. Community participation and initiative was emphasised rather than service delivery to passive, grateful clients. This model was to become increasingly important with the rise of equal opportunity policies (EOPs).

Within the Labour Party, from the late 1970s onwards, an increasingly harsh struggle took place between right and left for control. These national battles were also fought at a local level as municipal politics became an increasingly important site of activism.[20] In the selection processes of the early 1980s, both left and right mobilised to determine who would represent Labour in council elections. The departure of Labour councillors to the Social Democratic Party (SDP) in many areas, most notably in Islington in 1981, freed up seats for selections as well as shifting the political balance in local constituencies towards the left.

At the same time, within new urban left parties, demands increased for council Labour groups to be more accountable to the local party. In many places candidates selected to stand had to promise to abide by party decisions (S. Perrigo, 1986). Whether this is an antecedent or characteristic of progressive municipal politics is difficult to determine. It worked against the left in the late 1980s when many parties voted for balanced budgets and statutory compliance rather than defiance. Still, in the early 1980s, it was a means of ensuring that a wide variety of concerns and interests were channelled onto the local

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[20] On the struggles within Islington Labour Party, see J. Gyford (1985:26); S. Lansley et al. (1989:11); D. and M. Kogan (1983:ch. 11).

government agenda, facilitated by the increasing democratisation and significance of the manifesto process (see chapter three).

As I have indicated, the left's emerging interest in local government in the early 1980s took place for several reasons. One of the most significant however was the changing national political scene. From the late 1970s and the appointment of right-wing Labour MP, Jim Callaghan as prime minister, central government became seen as increasingly antithetical to the development of more radical policies. This view was strengthened with the 1979 Conservative general election victory. From then onwards until the late 1980s, progressive activists in and outside the Labour Party turned to local government instead as (i) a site from which to resist Thatcherism; (ii) a basis for mobilising people, particularly those most affected by central government policies; and (iii) as providing an opportunity to pre-figure a national, socialist government.

The politics of councils such as Manchester, Islington, and the GLC in the early 1980s, embodied a shift away from traditional perceptions of local government's role. Emphasis was placed on community participation and consultation, particularly with sections of the community historically ignored due to their race, class and gender.[21] Councils considered - and in some cases attempted - the decentralisation of services (D. Blunkett and K. Jackson, 1987:94-7) and, more controversially, political power.

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[21] G. Stoker (1988:ch. 9) discusses the close relationship between the urban left and community-based organisations. For many progressive Labour Party members and councillors without close ties with trades unions, community politics formed an important basis of support and alliances.

They became campaigners, protesting against reactionary policies, lending support to socialist movements (J. Gyford, 1985:52-6). This often precipitated symbolic initiatives - raising the red flag, renaming parks, libraries and community centres after international revolutionary figures[22] in order to draw attention to political issues deemed important: apartheid, nuclear power, unemployment.[23] Other developments by new urban left councils included anti-poverty strategies, local economic programmes (D. Blunkett and K. Jackson, 1987:ch. 6)[24] and, of particular relevance to later lesbian and gay equality work, the development of EOPs.

2. Equal opportunity policies.

EOPs have been a well-established feature of western social policy for several decades. In Britain, Solomos (1989) traces their origins back to the ad hoc racial policies of the 1950s and more specifically to those which followed the Race Relations Act 1976.[25] In local government, anti-discriminatory policies for Black people were joined in the late 1970s by similar policy statements targeted at women. Yet attempts to implement EOPs in local authorities in the 1970s were not generally successful (P. Nanton and M. Fitzgerald, 1990:157). Consequently, with the emergence of the new municipal left, the early

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[22] See for general discussion S. Lansley et al. (1989:68).

[23] See S. Lansley et al. (1989, ch. 5) on problems of symbolic policies. See also for further discussion chapters three and seven of this thesis.

[24] See also J. Sellgren (1987).

[25] P. Nanton and M. Fitzgerald (1990: 157); J. Solomos and W. Ball (1990:211); K. Young and N. Connelly (1984:13-25).

1980s witnessed the establishment of specialist mini-departments and strategic committees to improve anti-discriminatory work.[26] These units were also at the forefront of attempts to de-bureaucratise local government.[27] Button (1984) describes how early women's units and committees attempted to implement feminist organisational processes.[28]

Despite the popularity and widespread deployment of EOPs, as strategies they remained poorly defined and ambiguous (K. Young, 1990:32),[29] a problem that was to surface continually in the development of lesbian and gay work.[30] Policies to address racial and sexual inequality combined several different approaches and strategies: tackling direct and indirect procedural discrimination, positive action,[31] positive discrimination,[32] attempting to provide an equal

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[26] For research on local government EOPs for women see S. Brownhill and S. Halford (1990); S. Button (1984); A. Coyle (1989); K. Flannery and S. Roelofs (1984); S. Goss (1984); S. Halford (1988). On local government race equality initiatives and structures see W. Ball and J. Solomos (1990); G. Ben-Tovim et al. (1986); H. Ouseley (1984). For critique on policies omission of class, see A. Nelson (1990).

[27] Although they have been criticised for themselves becoming too bureaucratic; see K. Flannery and S. Roelofs (1983:75).

[28] See also S. Brownhill and S. Halford (1990:401).

[29] B. Hogwood and L. Gunn (1984:ch. 7) discuss the problems that arise in policy development when issues are inadequately defined.

[30] For theoretical work on equal opportunities see J. Edwards (1988/9); J. Fishkin (1987); B. Gross (1987); G. Loury (1987); J. Nickel (1987); L. Sumner (1987).

[31] Positive action, according to D. Mason (1990:52), entails measures targeted at a section of the community to assist that community's members in being able to compete equally. K. Young (1990:29) uses a broader definition which includes interventions to ensure groups receive their `fair` share of goods and services as well as enhancing respect and prestige of minority communities.

[32] Positive discrimination entails compensating for a groups inability to compete equally at the point of selection; D. Mason, (1990:53).

starting point and equality of outcome. Florig (1986) describes a further strategy: `prospect regarding equal opportunities between blocs`, by this he means that the likelihood of men and women, Black people and white people attaining a particular `good`, such as housing, should be the same.

Although authorities developing EOPs used a combination of the approaches described above depending on the issue in question - recruitment, for example, invoked different strategies to those deployed in cases of harassment or women's child care needs - there were also differences between authorities. Some emphasised a liberal-pluralist approach, focusing on the need for non-discriminatory procedures,[33] whilst others adopted more progressive strategies (D. Mason, 1990:51). Gurbux Singh, chief executive of Haringey council, describes these techniques as historically consecutive:

> `When equal opportunity initiatives were introduced into local government, the liberal notion of fair procedures was what long-standing personnel departments and bureaucrats opted for. However with the arrival in the mid 80s of specialist advisors and equalities units on an increasing scale...a concern with equality of outcome was increasingly put on the agenda. Conflicts ensued...between bureaucrats who for years viewed their work as `value neutral` and politicians and equalities advisors who saw all decisions as highly political.` (Priority for Equality Conference, Local Government Information Unit (LGIU), February 1991)

The development of EOPs to address race and sex discrimination, the attempts at non-hierarchical ways of working, were both extremely

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[33] Florig (1986) argues that EOPs are implicitly conservative since by masking class inequality they convey the assumption that equality can be achieved through social policies without the need for structural or systemic transformation. See also critique of liberal approach by S. Saggar (1991).

important in making local government appear a relevant and useful arena for lesbians and gay men. But the resonance of the new left agenda for lesbian and gay communities extended beyond EOPs and greater democratisation. The focus on culture and the arts by councils such as the GLC also held special meaning. This was not just due to the opportunities funding provided for large gay and lesbian festivals: `in the pink`,[34] `lark in the park`,[35] `strength and pride`.[36] It was also because of the links - identified by gay men in particular - between issues of sexuality and of culture, that is their shared emphasis on identity, community, the body, ideology, sexual expression and pleasure (D. Cohen and R. Dyer, 1980).[37]

According to Cohen and Dyer (1980:176-8), culture was a place where one could be `queer`; an identity which brought with it an artistic sensitivity. Moreover, culture was linked with femininity and hence held a resonance for men who did not perceive themselves as masculine. One could argue that this equation of homosexuality with culture affirms a number of social stereotypes, but that would be to miss the point. For gay men and lesbians negotiating their sexual and social identity, the arts, and culture more generally, provided both an important site of struggle and a means of expression. Consequently, local authority initiatives in this area, their funding of artifacts

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[34] Organised by the GLC, Autumn 1985.

[35] Funded by Edinburgh City Council, 1987.

[36] Funded and partly organised by LB Camden, Hackney, Haringey and Islington, 1987 to 1990.

[37] See also P. Gilroy (1990:193), the ideology of race initiatives led to an emphasis on culture and identity rather than politics and history.

and performances as a means of community development and identity affirmation, increased lesbians and gays' interest in local government.

C. THE CHANGING FACE OF THE LESBIAN AND GAY MOVEMENT, 1973-86.

In the previous section I discussed how urban left councils opened up the municipal political agenda for lesbian and gay issues in a new way. This was achieved by (i) constructing broad definitions of disadvantage; (ii) creating solutions such as equal opportunities and (iii) deploying organisational frameworks such as equality committees and units. However, these changes are not sufficient to explain why lesbian and gay municipal policies emerged. Thus, I now go on to discuss how and why lesbians and gays became interested in local government and how sexual politics reached the municipal agenda.

The discussion that follows provides a condensed history and analysis of lesbian and gay politics from the mid-1970s to early 1980s. Its purpose is to show how the changing paradigms of sexuality and identity evolved into a particular sexual politics that then entered the local government arena. This discussion does not however aspire to provide a full history of lesbian and gay politics during this period. My comments therefore focus on those developments of particular relevance to later local government initiatives.[38]

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[38] One effect of this is to place greater emphasis on London lesbian and gay politics since the bulk of lesbian and gay municipal initiatives took place in the capital.

1. Lesbian feminism.

In the early 1970s, politically active lesbians moved in different directions. Some became involved in mixed reformist (and social) organisations such as the Campaign for Homosexual Equality (CHE), some for a short while joined the more radical Gay Liberation Front (GLF), while others focused their activity on lesbian social organisations such as Sappho or became active in the Women's Liberation Movement (WLM). My focus here is on this latter WLM group.

Amongst those lesbians who became active in the WLM, many came with a history of involvement and subsequent disillusionment in mixed gay politics.[39] In Out (1977, no. 3), for example, Chris Gill provides an account of the difficulties she faced joining a CHE group, feeling as a woman unwelcome by the male majority.[40] Experiences of the GLF were little better and in February 1972 women's groups left en bloc,[41] principally to engage in feminist activism. Yet the experiences of lesbians in the WLM during the early 1970s was mixed. Aside from a few communities of lesbian separatists, lesbian feminists tended to find themselves marginalised, seen by the heterosexual majority as confirming others' stereotyped views of feminists and as distracting from more important areas of women's oppression. However, by the mid-

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[39] For discussion on the differences and tensions between lesbian feminist and gay politics, see M. Frye (1983:128-45); S. Jeffreys (1990:ch. 4-5).

[40] See also J. Dixon (1988), lesbians' concerns such as employment opportunities, poverty, male violence and child custody tended to be ignored.

[41] Kincaid (Gay Left, 1975), argues the departure of women was the biggest political reversal for the GLF. See also S. Watney (1980:71).

1970s the situation had begun to change. Bouchier (1983:ch. 4) argues that from 1975 the women's movement became more radical and the position of lesbians consequently stronger.

Towards the end of the decade, lesbian feminists started to develop and assert a theorisation of heterosexuality, which they defined as a socially constructed set of practices intended to maintain patriarchy. While socialist feminists attempted to synthesise or make such a theory compatible with marxism, other feminists argued that patriarchy - the oppression of women - was anterior to and more encompassing than any other social system, including capitalism. Women's oppression, they argued, occurred in many spheres, but heterosexuality possessed a special determinacy. Not only was male sexual access to women itself a significant objective of patriarchy but it also facilitated other forms of gender oppression.[42]

Within this analysis, no natural alliances were deemed to exist between lesbians and gay men.[43] Indeed in many ways the two groups were perceived as being at opposite ends of the spectrum. The oppression of lesbians was rooted in the oppression of women from which all men were deemed to benefit. Indeed gay men were seen by some as acting out the homoerotica of patriarchal society which celebrated male superiority and its gendered alienation from women.[44]

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[42] For general discussion in this area, see A. Rich (1981).

[43] See, for example, M. Frye (1983); A. Rich (1981).

[44] For alternative, more sophisticated analyses, see chapter seven.

Since heterosexuality was deemed functional to patriarchy, lesbianism therefore operated as a means of resistance. Symbolically and materially it was perceived to challenge patriarchal power. In Britain, this position was controversially advocated in 1979 by the Leeds Revolutionary Feminist Group (LRFG).[45] LRFG's analysis centred on the `Redstockings'` phrase `political lesbian`, which meant `a woman-identified-woman who did not fuck men`(Onlywomen (eds), 1981:67). LRFG argued that since the fundamental oppression, that of men over women, was maintained through sexuality (Onlywomen (eds), 1981:5), women should cease penetration, which they defined as an `an act of great symbolic significance by which the oppressor enters the body of the oppressed` (Onlywomen (eds), 1981:6). Instead women should become political lesbians.

The LRFG's strategy and analysis proved highly controversial. Not only heterosexual women resented the tone and strategy of the LRFG. Many lesbians too criticised the paper for being vanguardist, for defining women's sexuality in terms of men and for de-sexualising lesbianism.[46] Within the opposition shown to political lesbianism were the seeds of the later approach to sexuality that was to be adopted by lesbians and gays in municipal politics: that sexuality was basically a choice (although not an equal one) and that both lesbian and heterosexual women's decisions should be respected and deemed valid.

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[45] First published by Wires, 1981.

[46] See anonymous critique of `political lesbianism` (Onlywomen (eds), 1981:33-5). Similar criticisms have been made of Rich's concept of a `lesbian continuum`; see A. Ferguson et al. (1982). See also B. Campbell (1987); W. Clark (1987).

The tensions between self-defined radical and socialist feminists in the late 1970s and early 1980s carried through into their approaches to political organising and strategies for social change. In the main, British radical feminists eschewed attempts to transform or make use of patriarchal institutions (S. Brownhill and S. Halford, 1990:401). Thus, little work was carried out to achieve legal reforms or obtain state funding. Instead emphasis was placed on `autonomous` projects. The mid to late 1970s witnessed the development of many, including Lesbian Line, Rape Crisis and the London feminist bookshop, Sisterwrite. For, although becoming a lesbian was defined by many feminists as politically important, such a transition was not deemed sufficient in itself to transform society. The need to develop a feminist community was vital, as was challenging male power, particularly when manifested as sexual violence (D. Bouchier, 1983:ch. 5).

Equally important were pre-figurative organising and non-hierarchical structures. This emphasis on open, egalitarian processes augmented the difficulties many feminists had with organisations such as the Labour Party and the Fourth International, both of which operated according to rules, procedures and, in the case of the latter, within a vanguardist, centralist model. Consequently, in the mid and late 1970s, many lesbian feminists chose to remain outside formal state and party politics. Not all lesbian feminists however took this position. Others, particularly socialist feminists, continued to emphasise the importance of engaging with the state around issues such as abortion, child care, employment protection and equality, organising within the voluntary sector, and, to a limited extent at this time, within political parties.

In discussing the expansion of interest in local government in the 1980s, it remains unclear to what extent previously separatist feminists became involved or whether it was those women already active in state politics and reform-oriented strategies who were principally drawn in. Perhaps all that can be said is that whilst many lesbian feminists continued to remain at a distance from municipal politics in the 1980s, the movement as a whole underwent a converse shift in emphasis, as I describe below.

2. Gay liberation.

The British gay movement in the 1970s ranged from politically moderate organisations, such as CHE (J. Marshall, 1980) to more radical groups such as the predominantly male, Gay Liberation Front (GLF). CHE, which outlived most other gay organisations, perceived its role as two-fold: providing a social service for gays and working politically in the public realm to combat institutionalised discrimination.[47] The GLF, a radical gay movement heavily influenced by Black activist politics and feminism, emerged in many English-speaking countries in the late 1960s and early 1970s.[48] In Britain, the first meeting took place at the LSE in 1971.

> 'The gay movement for me really started with the South London GLF in 1972. ...They weren't very conventional, they were mostly younger and were into being public and talking about it. Also I remember a very, very early meeting when somebody said, "Let's

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[47] According to E. Cooper (Gay Left, Autumn 1975), CHE was about integration rather than rebellion.

[48] See B. Adam (1987); D. Altman (1971); J. Shiers (1980:140); D. Thompson (1985).

> think of the reasons why we are glad to be gay,"...` B. Thorneycroft et al. (1988:158)

GLF argued that homosexuality was inherently revolutionary because it challenged and could not be accommodated by patriarchal capitalism (K. Birch, 1980).[49] Influenced by marxist analyses of working-class consciousness, GLF granted gay experience an epistemological primacy. Since their sexuality was at odds with the status quo, gays were the class who truly understood social relations. Therefore they could lead or be catalysts in the revolutionary struggle, unleashing the homosexuality in everyone (B. Adam, 1987).

Such an analysis provided a focal point for criticism and debate.[50] It also, according to Ken Livingstone, provided the impetus for action.[51] In Lambeth, GLF activists attended Labour Party ward meetings making demands that shocked more traditional members. Although the GLF was unable to sustain itself and had faded out by the mid-1970s,[52] its place was filled by other similar groupings, including the marxist collective, Gay Left, which attempted to develop the links between socialism, feminism and gay liberation (B. Cant, 1988). Rather than provide an account of the shifting organisational loyalties within the

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[49] See also A. Brackx (Spare Rib, 1979); D. Milligan (Out, 1976-7); S. Watney (1980:68).

[50] See critique of GLF by S. Watney (1980). See also J. Shiers (1980:144) who argued that too much emphasis was placed on social change occurring as a result of individual effort.

[51] Interview with Ken Livingstone.

[52] An analysis of the breakdown of the GLF in the journal Gay Left (Spring 1986), argues a major reason for the Front's dissolution was the disproportionate emphasis placed on `coming out`. Thus the latter's partial realisation was seen as a revolutionary achievement, rendering GLF redundant, rather than as a first step.

gay movement, I simply outline some of the debates relevant to this thesis that occurred during this time.

One that remained ongoing, concerned the relationship between homosexuality and capitalism.[53] Not all gay radicals took the GLF position on their own revolutionary ontology (S. Watney, 1980:72). Some argued that capitalism could quite easily absorb gay liberation with its emphasis on reforms and consumerism (J. Shiers, 1980:145). Others, following Foucault, claimed that a homosexual identity was itself historically contingent; as a construction of modern medical-moral discourse, it could not be inherently radical.

Linked to this debate was a secondary argument concerning the ability to engage in pre-figurative sexual relations. Radical feminists claimed that one of the principal purposes of adopting a lesbian lifestyle was to build better sexual relations based on nurturing, egalitarianism and a less genitally-oriented erotica.[54] However such an approach was derisorily dismissed by lesbian and gay activists such as Wilson (Red Rag, no. 10), who argued it was impossible to transcend society and engage in unalienated sexual love. To suggest otherwise, she argued, was to imply lesbian and gay sexuality existed or could

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[53] See B. Marshall's (1989) critique of the journal Gay Left for neglecting a materialist analysis and for focusing insufficiently on the relationship between class oppression and gay oppression. However early issues of the journal emphasise the importance of a marxist analysis of oppression, see, for example, Gay Left, Autumn 1975, no. 1.

[54] See similar claims by J. D'Emilio (1983:111).

exist separately from other social relations, a prescription which negated homosexuality's own social origins and construction.[55]

The perception of homosexuality as socially constructed did however influence a more idealistic strand of gay politics whose objective was the dissolution of sexual categories. Within this framework, labels such as heterosexuality and homosexuality were perceived as oppressive and pathologising, serving merely to maintain and reinforce artificial divisions between people.[56] Demands for gay rights were hence seen as misconceived since they functioned to strengthen and reinforce the notion of an essential gay identity.

In arguing against essentialism, radical gay politics diverged from a radical feminism which in many ways asserted the social category `woman`. In other ways, however, gay left politics took feminist concerns seriously. For advocates of `effeminism` and political drag, the oppression of gay men was identified as a derivative aspect of sexism.[57] Yet aside from small groups such as the Brixton Fairies, this

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[55] This perception of homosexuality as non-instrumental in the achievement of social change is a point to which I return. In later municipal politics it provided a basis for rejecting claims by opponents of lesbian and gay policies that such policies would bring about revolutionary social change. Council officers also took this approach in refusing to make a value judgments between different kinds of gay sexual expression. The point of municipal initiatives, it was argued, was to provide equal treatment or rights for all homosexuals, not to deploy certain `pre-figurative` variations as social tools. See chapter eight for further discussion of this point.

[56] See D. Altman (1980:56); S. Watney (1980); J. Weeks (1980:19; 1985:198-9).

[57] See C. Riddiough (1981); D. Thompson (1985:ch. 3); N. Young (Gay Left, Autumn 1976).

intense embracing of feminism within radical gay politics had faded by the early 1980s. In its place emerged an analysis which treated women as allies and sexism as a parallel oppression. This was not the only change. Adam (1987) argues that by the late 1970s, the gay liberation movement internationally, had dwindled, leaving a proliferation of lesbian and gay interest and reform-oriented groups. Adam's discussion is principally in the context of North America. I wish to now consider the trajectory of this process within Britain.[58]

3. From revolution to identity: lesbian and gay politics, 1979-86.

By the early 1980s, lesbian and gay politics had undergone a substantial shift of emphasis. Within the women's movement, different groups challenged feminism's claims to provide a totalising picture of women's oppression and to speak for all women.[59] Many lesbians felt their particular oppression was discounted by a women's movement which perceived them as a political embarrassment. Black feminists, meanwhile, argued that their experiences of racism were ignored by the movement or treated as marginal, that feminist analyses of the family (and other social practices) were often racist and ethnocentric.[60] Within lesbian feminism, the critique offered by Black women, their

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[58] Since many of the developments within the UK lesbian and gay movement have similarities or parallels elsewhere, I use some non-British material in the discussion below.

[59] This point has been made by many activists and writers. For two examples see Canadian writer, M. L. Adams (1989:25); K. Bhavnani and M. Coulson (1986).

[60] See V. Amos and P. Parmar (1984); for different perspective, see discussion by G. Nain (1991).

demands for representation, consideration and autonomy, were paralleled by similar demands from other groups of women - Irish, Jewish, working-class, disabled, old and young.[61]

> `In general I believe that the movement outgrew itself and had begun to draw in larger numbers of black and working-class women...These new women found a movement which did not speak their language and only partly addressed their issues. ...Although revolutionary feminism rocked the boat it was the failure (or inability) of the WLM in the ensuing years to take class and race on board and make the step from seeing the world as sisterhood versus sexism...which eventually sunk the WLM boat, though not feminism.` (P. Holland, 1988:136)

The challenges posed by different groups of lesbians to the subsuming notion of `woman` had a number of different effects. Despite the conflict, and at times, acrimony, lesbian feminist activism became, in general, more aware of diverse forms of power and the ways in which these intersected with issues of gender. Although the extent to which increased consciousness impacted upon practice is uncertain, some changes did become apparent, for example, the increasing attempts to ensure venues for events were accessible to lesbians with physical disabilities.[62]

The trajectory of identity politics amongst gay men took, in the main, a somewhat different route. There, the deconstruction of the 1970s was replaced by a renewed affirmation of gay identity. The

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[61] See for reviews of these developments, K. Harris (1989:36-7); L. Harne (1988:69). Attempts to challenge marginalisation within the WLM and to assert other demands entailed conflict and ongoing struggle, see K. Bhavnani and M. Coulson (1986).

[62] It might be argued that this change was more apparent than real. Many lesbian feminist groups conformed to the demands of access codes by spelling out how accessible their venue was or <u>was not</u>, rather than, in some cases, changing their venue.

reasons for such a political shift are complex. Tatchell argues it was partly due to a realisation that GLF's analysis had not convinced many gay men.[63] Foucauldian approaches, which deconstructed sexuality and challenged notions of sexual `truths`, had little resonance for people fighting to come to terms with, and assert, their gayness. Thus, many activists recognised the need for a different strategy. The political climate had also changed. The election of a Conservative government in 1979 known for its new right agenda,[64] forced many gay and lesbian activists on the defensive.[65] Deconstructing homosexuality became a less appropriate strategy in an era when the government was perceived as pathologising and undermining it.

Changes in approach need also to be seen within the context of the rapidly growing lesbian and gay community of the late 1970s. Altman (1980), writing about similar changes in the USA, describes this new, openly `gay` community as non-apologetic about their sexuality, but also non-revolutionary. They were a community that wanted to enjoy being gay, to enjoy the new commercial venues that were opening up (D. Altman, 1980:58),[66] and who expected equal treatment. Thus, they would demonstrate for gay rights, oppose discrimination, but not fight for radical societal transformation. These `ethnic homosexuals`, considered

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[63] Interview with Peter Tatchell.

[64] See, for example, S. Jeffer y-Poulter (1991:138).

[65] See generally L. Segal (1987:ch. 2), the focus of progressive politics shifted to the defensive protection of inadequate services.

[66] See also B. Cant (1991:157); G. Blanchford (1981) on expression of diverse gay identities; and B. Adam (1987), how gay men's fashion changed from effeminacy and androgyny in the mid-1970s to expressing the `working-class masculine ideal`.

by Altman (1980:61) to be the most striking novelty of the late 1970s, posed a contrast to the gay activists of the early to mid-1970s. These latter, according to Weeks (B. Thorneycroft et al., 1988:163), `had pretty poor sexualities...They spent so much time talking about gay things that they didn't actually have much time to do many gay things...`

Alongside the growth and increasing commercialisation of gay identity was the popularisation of post-structuralist ideas. Paradoxically, this also facilitated the shift towards rights-oriented strategies. Whilst post-structuralism contained a critique of fixed identities and essentialism, its emphasis on difference, language and culture, its relational approach to power[67] and its critique of global theory helped to affirm and develop an identity politics grounded in notions of democratic pluralism.

With this new pluralistic identity politics of the early 1980s emerged a renewed interest in formal political processes.[68] What was demanded was not `revolution` but reforms that would defend and protect social identities, such as homosexuality.[69] Thus, the focus shifted towards state provision and services including those of local government.

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[67] That is, power was not held by one group and exerted over others, but that everybody was located within a field of power in such a way that most experienced being both powerful and powerless.

[68] See generally S. Button (1984).

[69] M. L. Adam (1989:22-3), argues that affirmation outweighed analysis of oppression, thus disrupting the transformative potential of identity politics. She also suggests too much time was spent demonstrating oppressions (1989:30).

The election of a Conservative government in 1979 also had an impact on the nature of political strategies, leading, paradoxically, to a greater preparedness to work within traditional political forums. Linda Bellos, leader of Lambeth council during the late 1980s, describes how she no longer found lesbian separatism an appropriate strategy. Bellos' words reflect the growing realism and anti-Utopianism of lesbian feminist communities at that time; a recognition that separatist structures principally benefited a minority elite who were able to participate and partake of the benefits. For the majority of heterosexual women and lesbians, their lives were closely bound up with state policies and provision, thus it was important to engage politically within those arenas. As Bellos states, "Thatcher was having a real, very dangerous effect on working-class women's lives."[70] For Bellos, the only vehicle that could proffer a challenge was a vibrant Labour Party. According to her, many other lesbian feminists came to similar decisions.[71]

The renewed interest in formal politics, the willingness to work with a broad range of people, was perhaps an unexpected consequence of the identity politics that emerged in the early and mid-1980s. Within lesbian communities, in particular, identity politics was <u>perceived</u> as leading to fragmentation as groups splintered further and further along race, class and disability lines. Yet identity politics has been in many ways a contradictory process. At the same time as leading to

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[70] Interview with Linda Bellos.

[71] Ibid. See also S. Perrigo (1986).

fragmentation, it brought forth a culture of alliances. It deconstructed lesbian and gay sexuality as too broad an identity, whilst at the same time affirming it. These contradictory effects were evident in the development of municipal lesbian and gay initiatives as the rest of this chapter and thesis reveals. Here I want to focus on one alliance which grew out of identity politics, an alliance that proved central to the establishment of council policies in this area - the improved working relationships between gay men and lesbians.

The shift away from treating oppression as operating along a single dimension of gender increased many lesbian feminists' willingness to work with men. Still, the extent of joint political organising between lesbians and gay men in the early 1980s should not be over-estimated.[72] It was also an extremely uneven process geographically. Facilitated in London by GLC funding of mixed gay projects, it was barely noticeable in Leeds and Manchester. Even in London, many lesbian feminists refused to adopt the new pluralist, identity politics.

> `I find it disturbing that some women who call themselves lesbian feminists have joined up with gay men in London, particularly after the experiences of lesbians in the GLF who had to recognise in 1972 that gay male interests were as oppressive to lesbians as those of heterosexual men. But now lesbians are working in the...recently launched Pink paper, and the London Lesbian and Gay Centre.` (L. Harne, 1988:69)

Despite the tensions that continued to exist between many lesbian and gay activists, the increasing willingness to acknowledge, and in some cases prioritise, a <u>homosexual</u> identity was an important factor in

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[72] See interview with Peter Tatchell who argues it did not really happen on any significant scale until the mobilisation against Local Government Act 1988, S. 28.

the development of lesbian and gay municipal initiatives.[73] This was witnessed in the popularisation of the term `heterosexism` in the 1980s, which referred to the oppressions of lesbians and gays <u>as</u> homosexuals. Policy analysts have argued that the larger the constituency, the more likely an issue will reach the political agenda.[74] Thus, constructing a shared identity undoubtedly increased the chances of getting lesbian and gay issues onto the political agenda than if women and men had organised separately.[75] It also facilitated a greater congruence with municipal perspectives. First, because local government tended to perceive lesbians and gays as a single category,[76] and second, because in perceiving lesbians and gays in this way, paradigms of minority group disadvantage could replace analyses of gender and power.

In this section I explored the changing politics of the lesbian and gay movement in order to understand how movement politics contributed to lesbians and gays turning towards local government. I argued that the political emphasis shifted away from autonomous organising to an interest in the state and away from perceiving sexuality as an

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[73] For example, many lesbians began to focus on their homosexual identity as opposed to their gendered one. The extent to which these two can be meaningfully separated, however, is an issue I return to at several points.

[74] See R. Cobb and C. Elder (1972: ch. 5).

[75] See chapter three, in particular the unsuccessful attempts of lesbians in LB Camden to acquire separate municipal structures.

[76] In Nottingham and Manchester's equal opportunities units, lesbian and gay disadvantage was seen as comprising a single form of oppression. Thus they were treated as one section with the same number of officers as had `women`. Recommendations in Nottingham that there be one lesbian officer <u>and</u> one gay officer were rejected on the grounds it would upset the balance of the unit; see chapter three.

instrument of social change towards one of minority rights. Lesbians and gays were presented as a section of the community with a right to equal treatment. Discrimination was problematised rather than sexual labels and categories.

Having laid the broad foundations of lesbian and gay issues' reconstitution within municipal politics, I now turn to consider the role played by different actors. In the main, councils did not adopt lesbian and gay policies in one fell swoop. Rather, it was a gradual process that generally began with the inclusion of lesbians and gays within equal opportunity policies and the provision of funding for homosexual community projects. Of the councils that went this far, only a few went further to establish committees and specialist officers as a means of progressing lesbian and gay work.

D. STRUGGLING WITHIN THE LABOUR PARTY.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, many lesbians and gays joined the Labour Party, while those who were already members `came out` in larger numbers.[11] Weeks (1985:191) suggests some reasons for this latter process more generally: the increasing concentration of gay men and lesbians in major conurbations; the greater acceptance of homosexuality within key areas of employment such as the public sector; increasing

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[11] See A. Durrell of CHE (City Limits, 19 January 1985), quoted by S. Jeffery-Poulter (1991:203). For accounts of entryism of gay men from Trotskyist organisations, see P. Derbyshire (1980) and B. Cant (1988:206-12).

visibility and acceptability of gay culture; and a potential leadership in the form of the new urban left.

In the 1970s, lesbians and gays in the Labour Party formed an organisation entitled Labour Campaign for Gay Rights (LCGR), later, the Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights (LCLGR). This group played an important role, campaigning for change within the party and in pressuring Labour councils to place lesbian and gay issues on their agenda. Equally important was the pressure exerted by feminist members, through formal women's sections and caucuses, for greater attention to be paid to the domestic sphere. This was most evident on the party's left. London Labour Briefing, (the journal of the London Labour left) commenced a `street-life` section to tackle sexual politics in the early 1980s. Written principally by women, its initial focus was gender. However, it did not take long before it was examining sexuality and homosexuality.[78]

Tatchell describes the dominant political approach of the Labour left to lesbian and gay issues as `civil rights oriented`.[79] It emphasised lesbians and gays' right to equal treatment and non-discrimination rather than constructing a radical analysis of sexuality. With the exception of some early articles, the emphasis was on public gay identity rather than on personal sexual practices and relations. Thus the links between gender and sexual orientation tended to be lost. Similarly, despite the adoption in the mid-1980s of the

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[78] See Streetlife supplement, London Labour Briefing, March, April 1982; B. Kennedy, London Labour Briefing, October 1982. See also M. Davis, Chartist, May/June 1979.

[79] Interview with Peter Tatchell.

concept `heterosexism`, little public discussion took place within the party on the nature of heterosexuality.

The left's analysis reflected the fact that most of the work was carried out by heterosexual feminists and gay men.[80] Few radical feminists worked within the Labour Party in the early and mid-1980s. Those who did, either participated too late, chose other priorities or were too politically marginalised to shape the direction of its sexual politics. Yet, despite such limitations, the left's position on homosexuality was far more radical than that of the national party.

In 1979, the Labour Government left office having resolutely managed to ignore gay demands for formal legal equality. However, in subsequent years, pressure from LCGR, from other groups and from individual members persuaded the party to proffer some kind of commitment. In 1981, the National Executive Committee (NEC) endorsed a policy document The rights of gay men and women. The document, publicly critical of the Labour Party's lack of activity on gay rights, made several recommendations including reducing the age of consent for gay male sexual activity from 21 to 18 (or possibly 16). It was a report very firmly located within a liberal sexual politics. It argued that sexuality was fixed very early, hence young people could not be `damaged`, and that what was required was `protection` for gays as a sexual minority. In 1982, this document was followed by an NEC policy statement on homosexuality, which included promises to reform the age of consent.

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[80] See A. Tobin (1990:56), the Labour movement never took on board the differences between lesbian feminist and gay male politics.

Misgivings nevertheless remained amongst activists as to the party's real degree of commitment.[81] The 1982 policy statement - committed the NEC to advocating a gay age of consent of eighteen rather than sixteen.[82] Jeffery-Poulter (1991:165) argues that the campaign document for the 1983 general election was even more cautious: the Labour Party would only protect homosexuals from `unfair` discrimination.

However, the event which was to become a catalyst for the mobilisation of lesbians and gays in and against the Labour Party during the early 1980s, particularly in London, was the treatment of gay Labour candidate, Peter Tatchell, in the 1982 Bermondsey by-election.[83] The London constituency of Bermondsey had always been a safe Labour seat. However, in 1982 it was won for the first time by the SDP, largely due to the press' character assassination of Tatchell[84], an assassination barely impeded by the national Labour Party.[85]

Tatchell's defeat had a significant effect on lesbian and gay activists within the Labour Party. It reinforced impressions of media homophobia and demonstrated the unwillingness of the Labour Party to

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[81] See P. Jones (London Labour Briefing, July 1981); see also A. Tobin (1990:58).

[82] According to the interview with Peter Tatchell, they feared the political implications of reducing it to sixteen.

[83] See S. Lansley et al. (1989:162).

[84] For fuller discussion see P. Tatchell (1983).

[85] See also the national Labour Party's treatment of lesbian MP Maureen Colquhoun when her local party deselected her (Autumn 1977), partly as a result of her sexuality; S. Jeffery-Poulter (1991:138).

support gay members under attack. People feared Tatchell's failure to win election in a `safe` Labour seat would reduce the chances of other `out` gays being selected to stand. Yet at the same time, Tatchell's experience had an empowering effect. A number of party members `came out` in their constituency parties as a result of his treatment.[86] Moreover, lesbian and gay activists became determined to ensure the ambivalence shown by the party to Tatchell was never repeated. It was therefore vital for the Labour Party to have policy which would publicly demonstrate its commitment to lesbian and gay rights.[87]

In 1984, the London Labour Party at its annual conference resolved to promote the introduction of `protective` legislation for lesbians and gays. A Lesbian and Gay Rights Working Party was established to carry out the work and to liaise with other lesbian and gay organisations.[88] At the same time, LCLGR began campaigning for lesbian and gay rights to be discussed at the national conference. Throughout the 1980s motions were sent but never discussed.[89] Finally, in 1985, sufficient motions were sent on lesbian and gay rights to force its

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[86] Interview with Peter Tatchell.

[87] This would protect gay and lesbian candidates by giving them policy to refer to, so that their support for lesbian and gay equality could less easily be personalised. It would also place more pressure on the national leadership and local parties to support such positions, since they would be in line with party policy.

[88] See ALA Lesbian and Gay Committee, Agenda, item 4, 17 March 1987.

[89] Up to 1985 insufficient motions were sent up to ensure discussion. See S. Twigg (Chartist, Nov/Dec 1986:4), on tactics deployed by the Labour Party NEC to ensure lesbian and gay rights were not discussed at the 1984 conference.

debate at conference.[90] Yet NEC support, with the personal exception of Jo Richardson, remained equivocal. However, despite their calls for remittance, the composite motion was passed. The following year, a similar motion received the two-thirds required for a policy decision to be automatically included within the party's national manifesto.[91]

I have focused here on the gradual emergence of a national Labour Party `consensus` in favour of lesbian and gay rights because it was an important factor in facilitating the struggles of local activists to have lesbian and gay issues placed on local election manifestos (see chapter three). After 1985, lesbians and gays struggling in local parties could point to conference policy to legitimise and give weight to their demands. Indeed, as a result of the resolution's success, Larry Whitty, Labour Party general secretary, was obliged to write to all council Labour groups informing them that lesbian and gay rights were now party policy.

Yet the equivocation of the national party did not disappear with the success of motions at conference. Nor did local party opposition vanish with the inclusion of lesbian and gay issues in local manifestos

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[90] At the 1985 TUC congress a motion to end discrimination against lesbians and gay men was agreed (Gay Times, October 1985).

[91] An important factor identified by lesbians and gay men in achieving these results was the alliances formed with other sections of the community. During the mid-1980s, the high profile support of gays and lesbians for the miners and Wapping printers strikes, earned the community a degree of reciprocal (although possibly transient) respect, illustrated by the NUM contingent on the 1985 Gay Pride march. In Manchester, Shiers argues (Lesbian and Gay Socialist, Spring 1985), `visible` gays in the Labour Party working with other party activists on a whole range of issues were instrumental in achieving greater support for lesbian and gay demands.

nor with the passage of constituency resolutions. The superficial nature of policy development within mainstream political parties is clearly revealed in the history of lesbian and gay initiatives. Even amongst supporters, little consideration was generally given to the form, history and implications of heterosexist and homophobic practices.

For many, the admission of lesbian and gay `equality` onto the Labour Party agenda was a purely token measure.[92] The surprise was that left-wing activists managed to convert a `pseudo-agenda` into a real one. Yet despite this success, the lack of wide-spread, real commitment seriously affected the development of lesbian and gay work as this thesis demonstrates.

E. ENGAGING WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENT.

The involvement of lesbian and gay communities in achieving homosexual issues' reconstitution within municipal agendas is a complex and contradictory one. Here, I discuss some aspects of the community-council interface. In doing so, I hope to reveal the interactive nature of municipal developments. For lesbian and gay demands grew as authorities demonstrated a willingness to take such issues seriously.

However, despite the increasingly pro-active nature of lesbian and gay interaction with local government, I argue that the structures established in the mid-1980s to deliver lesbian and gay policies did

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[92] R. Cobb and C. Elder (1972:87) talk about a `pseudo agenda`. Items are admitted to assuage without proper consideration of what they entail.

not in general arise out of community activism, but were principally due to pressure from Labour Party councillors and local government officers.

From the late 1970s, 'esbian and gay voluntary sector projects and organisations began to request local authority funding on a widespread scale. The GLC was the first body to respond in any significant way. Between 1981 and 1986, it granted over a million pounds to lesbian and gay groups.[93] Other councils too provided grant aid. Early funders included LB Islington, Manchester and the West Midlands.

Yet amongst lesbian and gay activists, decisions about whether to apply for local authority funding remained highly contested. Many people were wary of accepting state resources, fearing it might lead to co-option, dependency and de-politicisation.[94] Femi Otitoju (1988:222-231) describes the `should we shouldn't we?` debate in relation to the GLC:[95]

> `I was suspicious. I had heard all sorts of tales about what happened to small voluntary organisations that were funded by bigger statutory organisations, and I didn't like the prospect of being co-opted in this way... You were accountable to the council, and they controlled what you could and couldn't do once you had their money... `

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[93] This was a small fraction of its total funding budget for this period. See also B. Cant (1991:160).

[94] See L. Harne (1988:68-9).

[95] See also in relation to GLC funding of Black and minority ethnic groups, H. Ouseley (1990:142).

Although lesbian and gay groups mostly decided to take the route of municipal funding, the problems raised in these early debates continued to rear their heads as I discuss later in this thesis.

From the mid-1980s, AIDS also became an issue which brought many gay men into a closer working relationship with local government. As more men either became ill or suffered harassment and discrimination due to the moral panic surrounding the virus,[96] local government increasingly became a relevant site of activity. Not only was it an arena where many gay men and people with AIDS (PWAs) experienced the most severe forms of ill-treatment, it was also a provider of key services such as home helps and housing, and of employment. As a result, AIDS organisations as well as other groups and individuals campaigned for local government to improve its services and treatment of PWAs.[97] For many gay men, AIDS changed their political priorities. Discourses on sex shifted from libertarian imperatives to safety and education (D. Altman, 1989:35). Similarly, the need for anti-discriminatory measures superseded earlier prioritisation on lowering the age of consent.[98]

In the case of AIDS, changing circumstances drew the lesbian and gay community towards local government. In other instances, the growing

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[96] See S. Jeffery-Poulter (1991:176-85) on the media's response.

[97] See J. Meldrum (Capital Gay, 4 October 1985) referred to by S. Jeffery-Poulter (1991:188) on the need to tackle discrimination in housing and schools facing PWA. See also ALA Lesbian and Gay Committee, Agenda, item 14, report on London AIDS conference - `planning local services`, 13 July 1985.

[98] Though see comments of J. Meldrum, ibid. It is arguable that the age of consent has now returned as a priority, as witnessed by the development since 1986 of various anti-discrimination draft bills by lesbian and gay community organisations.

prevalence of a rights-based identity politics led lesbian and gay residents to become increasingly conscious and frustrated by areas of council provision within which they experienced discrimination and unequal treatment. One such area was adoption and fostering policies. For gay men adoption was almost impossible, although occasionally they were given `hard to place` children to foster. For lesbians it was marginally easier. However, at best they were granted parity with single women since their relationships were not recognised as an asset to their ability to parent. This contrasted with the preference given to heterosexual couples, in particular married couples.

Another area which became increasingly a site of engagement with local government was homelessness.[99] In part this was due to the general housing shortage, but was also affected by the growing numbers of lesbians and gay men `coming out` and the attendant consequences. Other housing problems also related to the increasing visibility of lesbians and gays and their expectations of equal treatment. These included harassment, insensitive treatment by housing officers, difficulties in acquiring joint tenancies and discriminatory succession policies (see chapter three).

Discrimination in housing and social services provision was experienced by lesbians and gays on an individualistic basis. Combined with the relative powerlessness of, for example, council tenants, this made community action to remedy disadvantage very difficult. According to Bellos, who, in 1983, was a member of Lambeth Lesbian and Gay

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[99] London Strategic Policy Unit, Lesbian and Gay Issues, Policy Development and Legislation, 1967-87, (1988).

Working Party: "we all complained but didn't know how to make inroads into the council".[100] Before units and committees were established, Ken Livingstone suggests that lesbians and gays with problems would approach individual councillors.[101] Such a strategy relied heavily on councillors' good-will and consequently many lesbians and gays chose not to take problems to them.[102] Sheila Rushworth, women's officer for Birmingham council makes a similar point.[103] She claims that in Birmingham lesbians and gays did not make demands because they felt the council would not respond.

The situation was somewhat different in the field of education. There, from the early 1970s, feminist and gay teachers worked collectively to develop anti-sexist curricula and to protect homosexual staff and students from harassment. Most of this work took place at a grass-roots level within the classroom, sometimes with the support and backing of the principal, sometimes without. Until the early 1980s, it rarely involved local education authority management directly, although clearly councils were involved by schools' very status as part of the local government apparatus.

Other educational initiatives took place within the youth service.[104] In 1976, young gays in London formed the predominantly male, London Gay

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[100] Interview with Linda Bellos.

[101] Interview with Ken Livingstone.

[102] Ibid.

[103] Interview with Sheila Rushworth.

[104] See London Gay Teenage Group (1984) on the experiences and needs of young lesbians and gays in London.

Teenage Group (LGTG). After two to three years campaigning they won funding and recognition from the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA). Dixon et al. (1989:233-4, 239), describe the relationship between the local state and gay youth provision.

> `It is...important to note that it was not the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) or other London education authority hierarchies who started to do this work, but lesbians and gays within these youth services who struggled for years to persuade them to take it on. ILEA's recognition was valuable in terms of mainstream status, money and facilities. ...The registration process for the LGTG took two years (1977-1979). The group was considered highly controversial by the ILEA hierarchy, but the members of the group systematically set about putting their case forward to youth officers, committees and members of ILEA.`

Youth workers, but even more teachers, were assisted by having an institutional base. This brought gay and lesbian educational workers together, enabling them to share concerns and strategies. Unions such as the National Union of Teachers (NUT) provided some organisational support. More important perhaps were the Women in Education Group and the Gay Teachers Group.

Nevertheless, despite work in fields such as education and the demands for voluntary sector funding, the formal, organisational structures established by local government for lesbian and gay work did not ,in general emerge out of community demands and pressure. Gays, and in particular the lesbian feminist community, remained detached from traditional forms of political power. Although activists began to request municipal funding, they were intent on achieving it with minimal compromises to their political autonomy. Few perceived funding requests as a route to greater involvement with local government. Bob Crossman, a leading, gay Islington councillor, commented when interviewed on how hard it was to involve people in the policy-making

process.[105] Other interviewees made similar statements. Lesbians and gays would attend public meetings called by councillors and officers and a minority sat as community representatives on council committees. However, as an organised community, with a few exceptions, they were not a primary motivating force in establishing lesbian and gay municipal structures. Bellos takes this point even further.

> "We were very introspective and insular - dress codes, words used... Local government took the initiative. It led to lesbians and gay men being redirected towards service provision."[106]

Yet, lesbian and gay communities did play an important and influential role in resisting council attempts to backtrack and in opposing authorities with explicitly homophobic policies. In Rugby (1984), the Conservative council leadership's decision to strike out `sexual orientation` from an equal opportunities clause in an employment policy was opposed by Labour councillors, the National Association of Local Government Officers (NALGO) and by CHE.[107] It led to a march and rally on 10 November 1984, attended by over 1,000 demonstrators.[108] Subsequently, a more progressive policy statement was issued.

Similar successes were evident in other local authorities. Fitzpatrick and Love (Lesbian and Gay Socialist, Winter 1985) describe how Stirling District Council, which first turned down a request by the

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[105] Interview with Bob Crossman.

[106] Interview with Linda Bellos.

[107] A. Armitage, Gay Times, (November 1984, no. 75:18-19).

[108] Gay Times, (December 1984, no. 76:10-11). See also S. Jeffery-Poulter (1991:174).

Scottish Homosexual Rights Group to include sexual orientation in their EOP, changed their minds after discussion with LCLGR. In Stockport (1985), a refusal by the council to include lesbians and gays in their equal opportunity job code led to a campaign aimed at reversing the policy.[109] After several failed attempts working within the council, a national demonstration was called for 15 March 1986. Paul Hinshaw, a gay men's officer with Manchester City Council, told Gay Times (March 1986, no. 90:11), "our victory at Rugby proves that we have the power to change the attitudes of local authorities who because of prejudice, discriminate against us". The Stockport demonstration was attended by over 600 people.[110] In July 1986, Stockport changed its EOP to include sexual orientation.[111]

Although in other authorities, most noticeably Nottingham County Council, lesbian and gay community pressure was largely unsuccessful, the successes of the campaigns described above demonstrated the emerging clout and legitimacy of lesbian and gay demands for equal treatment. This was particularly evident in the case of Labour authorities that espoused broad notions of equality of opportunity and human rights. To deny such opportunities and rights to lesbians and gays became increasingly hard to justify.[112] In the case of other

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[109] Gay Times, (October 1985, no. 86:8; Dec/Jan 1985/6 no. 88:9).

[110] Gay Times, (April 1986, no. 91:9).

[111] Gay Times, (August 1986, no. 95:6).

[112] How far councils were prepared to go in order to maintain political credibility and legitimacy varied according to their political composition, the strength and politics of lesbian and gay communities and the strength of the left. In some places, a civil-rights approach was deemed sufficient; in others, a commitment to challenging heterosexism was required.

authorities, issues of stability were more important in ensuring paper commitments to lesbians and gays. The growing size and strength of opposition to homophobic policies and the publicity such opposition engendered meant it was easier for councils to make a tokenistic commitment than to continue to resist such initiatives.

F. LESBIAN AND GAY COUNCIL STAFF ORGANISE.

Earlier in this chapter, I discussed the changing composition of the workforce of urban authorities. As with the Labour Party, during this period more lesbians and gays came to work for local government and more began to come out. From the mid-1970s, lesbian and gay council officers began to organise autonomously within local authorities (B. Cant, 1991:158). This took the form of union groups,[113] policy working parties which examined issues of discrimination, and groups to provide lesbian and gay employees with support (see chapter three). Initially, employee groups tended to focus on staff concerns such as harassment, compassionate and carers' leave, pensions, and recruitment policies. However, later they widened their remit to encompass service provision and the need for comparable municipal structures to those being established for women, Black people and people with disabilities. Jane Skeates, lesbian and gay research officer in Camden, 1985 to 1986, describes this process within her authority:

> "People (officers) talked about a unit from the beginning. That was the expectation. We had absorbed municipal values to know we wanted a unit, like the women's unit." [114]

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[113] These were principally under the auspices of NALGO which developed relatively early equal opportunity policies that included lesbians and gays.

[114] Interview with Jane Skeates.

For many lesbians, a key motivating factor, alongside the growing identification with gay men as homosexuals discussed earlier, was disillusionment with the response to lesbian issues by women's equality structures. In many, including the GLC women's unit, lesbians were particularly active (A. Tobin, 1990:58). However, many councillors and senior management resisted attempts by women's committees and units to engage publicly in work concerning lesbians.[115] In general, lesbian concerns were seen as marginal, contrary to the interests of ordinary (working-class) women and unacceptably controversial. Yet despite the constant struggles between feminists, women equality officers and politicians over the degree of attention to be given to lesbian concerns, the high concentration of lesbians within women's equality structures combined with their broadly feminist perspectives meant they were often the most sympathetic municipal environments for lesbians (and sometimes for gay men too).[116]

G. PIONEERING MUNICIPAL LESBIAN AND GAY WORK: KEN LIVINGSTONE AND THE GLC.

The GLC was by no means the first authority to develop lesbian and gay municipal work, nor was it the most radical. However, it was probably the best known of the pre-1986 developments. I examine it here because the GLC's renown in this area was an important factor in the

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[115] A. Tobin (1990:58) argues women's committee chairs often had little understanding or experience of the WLM. See also interview with Sheila Rushworth.

[116] See, for example, A. Tobin (1990:60).

development of lesbian and gay work in other authorities. In this brief discussion I explore why such policies arose, the factors that facilitated their relative success and the problems encountered. In many ways the GLC approach to equal opportunities formed the blue-print for initiatives elsewhere. Thus, many of the problems encountered by the GLC were also repeated in other places.

The Labour Party fought the 1981 GLC elections on a manifesto which did not include a commitment to lesbian and gay rights. Indeed Livingstone argues, initiation of lesbian and gay work by the GLC was largely accidental,[117] arising, he claims, out of a chance encounter with the Harrow Gay Unity Group, whom he was asked to address in 1981. It was also, he suggests, the paradoxical and contrary response to the press' subsequent outcry.[118]

Whether, and in what form, lesbian and gay work might otherwise have arisen at the GLC is impossible to predict. What is evident however is that Livingstone's support for lesbian and gay equality as a heterosexual combined with his comments on bisexual innateness challenged the traditional, low key, shame-faced approach towards homosexuality of many left-wing activists. Livingstone takes up this point:

> "Seeing `Before Stonewall`[119] reminded me of how in the 1960s I took advantage of being `tolerant to a disadvantaged minority`. It wasn't `til 1971-2 when I was on Lambeth Council and the first

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[117] Interview with Ken Livingstone.

[118] Ibid.

[119] A documentary film on lesbian and gay twentieth century history in the USA.

> debates were sparked off by the GLF down Railton Road that I got my head round the concept of equally valid sexualities."[120]

Otitoju (1988:228) argues that Livingstone's public support encouraged lesbians and gays working for the GLC to `come out` and push for progressive policies. Jan Parker, a former officer with the GLC states:

> "He was happy to stick his foot in the door to help it open and then let others get on with it..."[121]

According to Bellos, other factors were also significant in explaining the GLC's ability to support lesbian and gay equality.[122] These included left-wing GLC councillors' willingness to respond to lesbian and gay demands (such as for funding) because they were <u>community</u> demands, the paucity of services the GLC had to deliver being a strategic authority with few powers, their extensive resources (compared to other authorities) and the existence of a well-developed bureaucratic infrastructure. These factors, she claims, allowed the GLC to campaign on issues like lesbian and gay equality without detrimentally affecting service provision, a situation unmatched elsewhere.[123]

Despite the praise, the GLC's approach to lesbian and gay issues also came under criticism (B. Cant, 1986). Otitoju (1988:228) states that despite proponents' wishes, because of the `flak`, the Gay Working Party never received full committee status, specialist officers were

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[120] K. Livingstone interviewed by K. Kirk (<u>Gay Times</u>, April 1986, no. 91:50-2).

[121] Interview with Jan Parker.

[122] Interview with Linda Bellos.

[123] Ibid.

not employed, and resourcing for lesbian and gay work was extremely limited. Jan Parker, in her interview, argues that the GLC benefited from the kudos of lesbian and gay work that was carried out by council officers on top of regular jobs. Tobin (1990:57) makes similar points. She claims support within the GLC for lesbian and gay issues was always equivocal. Coterminous with the launch of the GLC charter Changing the world, the council's housing department refused to fund a project investigating lesbian and gay housing need. There was also a lack of strategic thought which caused tensions between various aspects of equality work, particularly around sexuality and class.

> `It was...a system that was ripe for guilt-tripping and denunciations. GLC equalities at times resembled a wartime bunker or a city under seige, riven by internal strife whilst the Tory enemy massed its forces around the city's or County Hall's walls.` (A. Tobin, 1990:64)

However, despite the national focus on the GLC, in other authorities progress was also taking place.[124] In London, by the Autumn of 1985, at least ten of the thirty-two boroughs, included lesbians and gays in their equal opportunity policy statements for employment and housing (S. Jeffery-Poulter, 1991:204). Elsewhere, by 1 April 1986, when the Metropolitan authorities were abolished, Manchester, Southampton, and Nottingham had all developed lesbian and gay committees and many other councils across the country were taking up lesbian and gay work in different ways (see chapter three).

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[124] See B. Cant (1991:165-6) for a brief discussion on lesbian and gay developments in Scotland.

H. CONCLUSION.

In this chapter I have explored the process by which lesbian and gay issues became reconstituted within the municipal agenda. In particular, I have focused on the impact and activity of lesbians and gays in the Labour Party and local government since it was they, rather than community activists, who brought about the initiation of structured municipal strategies.

It is unlikely, however, such policies would have happened without the broader changes in the Labour Party and local government discussed in the first part of this chapter. The interest of the new urban left in equal opportunities, multi-culturalism, cultural and artistic provision, and the deployment of local authorities as apparatuses of change and resistance, converted the experiences of lesbians and gays into issues of relevance for local government.

Equally important were the shifting politics of lesbian and gay communities. For those individuals and groups who placed lesbian and gay issues on the municipal agenda were in the main profoundly affected by these changing perspectives and debates. The movement within lesbian feminism in the early 1980s, from a separatist sexual politics to a concern with identity and discrimination, encouraged lesbians to work for social reforms within traditional political structures, and paradoxically, to form alliances with gay men. Within the gay community, politics shifted away from homosexuality's revolutionary potential and the need to dissolve sexual identities towards an

affirmation of gay identity and demands for equal treatment, due in part to a new gay consumerism and rapidly expanding community.

Other factors also facilitated the increased interest in the potential of local government, EOPs and anti-discriminatory measures; in short, the redefining of the `gay` issue as something compatible with a progressive municipal politics. These included the ageing of radical communities (leading to new interests, needs and concerns), the impact and effects of AIDS, professionalisation (amongst the generation of post-Stonewall activists) and Thatcherism. Nevertheless, despite the specificity of the British situation, similar trends have been identified elsewhere, particularly in the USA.[125]

As I have attempted to show, the emergence of lesbian and gay issues on the political agenda of local government was a symbiotic process that quickly escalated. As the Labour Party became more sympathetic, lesbians and gays became more interested in what it could offer. Similarly, with local government, lesbian and gay demands increased as local authorities started to respond. Thus, what began on a very small scale in the early 1980s quickly expanded. In the late 1980s the converse happened. As lesbians and gay men became disillusioned, their interest dropped and as their interest dropped, councils became less motivated to develop gay policies. This process is something I discuss in more detail in chapter seven.

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[125] See, for example, B. Adam (1987).

CHAPTER THREE.

DISTRUST, HOPE AND DISILLUSIONMENT:

DEVELOPING LESBIAN AND GAY WORK.

A. INTRODUCTION.

In chapter two, I discussed the largely accidental emergence of lesbian and gay work at the Greater London Council (GLC). Yet, despite the GLC's reputation, lesbian and gay developments never became fully incorporated into the council's infrastructure. In this chapter I consider three authorities of the six closely studied which pursued an incorporationist strategy, consciously developing structures to deliver, at least ostensibly, lesbian and gay work. These three authorities: Islington, Nottingham and Camden represent different stages of development. In telling their stories, I explore the following questions: what changes took place over the period studied (1982 to 1987) and how did that effect lesbian and gay work? What problems did lesbian and gay committees encounter? And how similar or different were the experiences of these authorities?

B. LONDON BOROUGH OF ISLINGTON.

The LB Islington is situated just to the north of the City of London. It has a population of about 168,000,[1] approximately one-third of whom come from minority ethnic communities.[2] Islington

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[1] Association of London Authorities (ALA), Local Government Directory, 1988.

[2] Ibid.

possesses both an older working-class community and a newer, middle-class one. It also has an established gay community. Since the abolition of the GLC in 1986, the borough has been a single tier authority responsible for all services with the exception of education.[3] All fifty-two council seats are up for re-election every four years.

Islington council's earliest initiative for its lesbian and gay communities was the funding of London Friend, a London-wide counselling and support agency for homosexuals, in 1975. By 1980, responding to what it perceived as a growing gay population, the council began to stock books of particular `lesbian and gay interest`.[4] However, substantial developments in this area of equality work did not get under way until after the 1982 local borough elections.

In the three years between 1979 and 1982, the composition of Islington Labour Party and council changed. In 1981, the left took control of key local party positions, allowing them to democratise the process through which the manifesto for the 1982 borough elections emerged.[5] In the introduction to Labour's 1982 manifesto an explicit commitment to lesbian and gay rights was included,[6] largely due to the work of one person: Bob Crossman - council member from 1982 until 1988, chair of the Lesbian and Gay Working Party and Sub-Committee, and mayor from 1986 to 1987. From the start, Islington's lesbian and gay policies

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[3] This changed with the abolition of the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) in 1988.

[4] Interview with Stan Marsh (in a personal capacity).

[5] Interview with Bob Crossman.

[6] Ibid.

were closely identified with Crossman and need to be analysed within this context.

1. Striving for success.

Shortly after Labour's victory in the May elections, it was agreed that a gay and lesbian working party be established. On the initiative of Bob Crossman, a meeting of community activists was convened, and on 21 October 1982, the first meeting of the Gay and Lesbian Advisory Working Party took place.[7] The Working Party was structured informally in order to encourage community activists present to contribute.[8] Attendance by women was however low. Thus the first meeting minuted the need to increase lesbian participation.[9]

In discussing the history of Islington's gay and lesbian committee, what stands out were the committee's constant, yet fruitless attempts to increase its own effectiveness through raising its status. In July 1983, after ten months as a working party, the committee resolved (with the council's agreement) to transform itself into a formal sub-

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[7] The Working Party was a sub-committee of Policy and Resources Committee, a key strategic committee.

[8] At the first meeting ten observers were present as well as three councillors; Gay and Lesbian Advisory Working Party, Minutes, 21 October 1982.

[9] Gay and Lesbian Advisory Working Party, Minutes, item 4, 21 October 1982. This situation did not quickly improve. See Islington Gay and Lesbian Sub-Committee, Minutes, item 7, 1 October 1985 where due to no nominations for two vacant places reserved for women it was decided to advertise and ask the advice of the council's women's committee support unit. The low visibility of women on the committee is also evident from the comment of one co-optee interviewed who said he could only remember one woman being involved (although it is apparent from the minutes that other women were involved as well).

committee of the strategic, senior Policy and Resources Committee, with co-opted representatives from local gay groups.[10] Groups, however, did not rush forward.[11] As a member of Gay Switchboard explained, they were happy to have representatives attending and participating at meetings, but did not want formal co-options.[12]

The unwillingness of groups to nominate individual co-optees (the council rejected the idea of organisational membership) revealed community activists' unease at giving individuals in their groups personal power. It also demonstrated a distrust of the `local state`.

> `The organised lesbian and gay community were suspicious. People who got involved in the early 1980s were seen as turn-coats and their political credibility undermined.` (D. Dawson interview)

By 1984, with similar municipal initiatives being developed elsewhere, and a gradual warming of feelings towards local government, three organisations made successful nominations for places on the Sub-Committee: London Friend, the London Lesbian and Gay Centre (LLGC) and Campaign for Homosexual Equality (CHE).

Yet despite community representation, and the meeting's status as sub-committee, by the second half of 1984, committee members began increasingly to lose confidence in the committee's effectiveness. Inquorate meetings led to demoralisation and in the spring of 1985 the situation worsened. The council leadership began to cancel meetings,

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[10] Gay and Lesbian Advisory Working Party, Minutes, item 5, 12 July 1983.

[11] No replies were received by the committee secretariat from groups wishing to nominate co-optees; Gay and Lesbian Sub-Committee, Minutes, item 10, 20 September 1983.

[12] Ibid.

provoking an angry response from both the Sub-Committee and NALGO Lesbian and Gay Worker's Group.[13] Desperate to salvage the situation, the Sub-Committee saw a solution to waning interest and lack of political clout in a further increase of its status. On 9 November 1987, five years after its initial meeting, the Gay and Lesbian Sub-Committee became a full committee.

The minutes of this committee meeting reveal other changes; in particular, the extent to which lesbian and gay municipal politics in Islington had become embedded in the discourse and politics of equality work more generally. First, the meeting resolved that the new committee should have the same number of members as other `equality` committees in the hope this would lead to a greater parity of status and resources. Second, it was decided that the vice-chair should be a co-optee rather than a councillor and preferably a woman.[14] In similar vein, the title of the committee was changed to `lesbian and gay` to denote recognition of the greater `disadvantage` faced by lesbians.

2. Keeping lesbian and gay work unpaid.

Limited as it was, Islington's response to its lesbian and gay staff took place within the context of broader, more generic, equal opportunity strategies. Codes of practice and other employment policies incorporated lesbians and gays as one element within a list of `disadvantaged` groups. Yet whilst Islington, at least on paper, had relatively liberal lesbian and gay employment policies, the council

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[13] Gay and Lesbian Sub-Committee, Minutes, item 5, 21 March 1985.

[14] Lesbian and Gay Committee, Minutes, item 1, 9 November 1987.

relied on lesbian and gay staff's commitment and goodwill to help develop and implement them. In 1983, NALGO lesbian and gay group began holding meetings in order to explain to workers the council's initiatives in challenging anti-gay discrimination.[15] Yet although the union participated in the development of lesbian and gay policies, they were at the same time conscious of their primary responsibility to represent and look after their members' interests. Thus they supported and pushed for policies aimed at combatting discrimination,[16] whilst opposing proposals such as surveys and questionnaires seen as rendering gay staff even more vulnerable.[17]

In common with similar committees elsewhere, Islington's lesbian and gay committee argued for improvements to council employment policies. However, their key demand was for a specialist lesbian and gay officer. Without such a post, it was argued, the initiatives which the committee was proposing could not be effectively developed or implemented.

On 12 July 1983, the Gay and Lesbian Working Party formally requested that officer support be made available to them.[18] At the time, it was felt this might prove possible since generic equal opportunity officers were about to be appointed. However, two months later, they

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[15] Gay and Lesbian Sub-Committee, Minutes, item 5a, 20 September 1983.

[16] Gay and Lesbian Advisory Working Party, Minutes, item 10, 12 July 1983.

[17] NALGO representatives recommended instead training on heterosexism for non-lesbian and gay employees. Gay and Lesbian Sub-Committee, Minutes, item 4, 2 April 1984.

[18] Gay and Lesbian Advisory Working Party, Minutes, item 11, 12 July 1983.

were informed by the director of personnel that due to the new officers' heavy workload they would be unable to support the lesbian and gay committee to any significant extent.[19] Members of the committee heard the director out, but when he had finished they reiterated the need for officer support. They argued that staff employed with an equal opportunities brief had a responsibility for all areas of equality work including lesbians and gay men. From the minutes it appears this point was not pushed and instead attention shifted to supporting a future bid by Personnel Committee for specific support for lesbian and gay work.[20] This too failed but the lesbian and gay committee did not give up. They continued to argue that without a policy and outreach worker, their role could be little more than tokenistic.[21] That year, in 1987, the committee applied again for paid workers, hoping it could be included within the council's forthcoming 1988/9 budgetary provision for two per cent growth. Once more, the request was ignored.

The committee's struggle for a lesbian and gay officer, was, like the aspiration to be a full committee, a constant striving for full and proper inclusion within the council's EOPs. By the mid-1980s, Islington council, one of the first to respond to lesbian and gay discrimination, was being rapidly overtaken by other authorities such as Camden and Haringey. Later I discuss whether this equation of organisational status with effectiveness, this emphasis on bureaucratic structures was

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[19] Gay and Lesbian Sub-Committee, Minutes, item 11, 20 September 1983.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Lesbian and Gay Committee, Minutes, item 7(ix), 9 November 1987.

misguided. Here I wish briefly to consider why Islington's response was so restrained.

Clearly a key factor in the committee's inability to successfully bid for funds was the council's own shortage of resources. Yet such financial hardship was equally evident in other local councils such as Haringey and Camden. Islington had a larger, more vocal gay community than other authorities, yet lesbians and gays were still unable to make their demands fully felt within the process of resource prioritisation. Moreover, electoral considerations, a factor elsewhere, were barely relevant for an authority which after 1986 had one of the largest Labour majorities in London.

Perhaps then the principle reason for Islington's policy lag; its refusal to appoint specialist staff to develop lesbian and gay work, lay in internal Labour Party politicking, in particular the determination of the council leadership to rid themselves of any `loony left` image that might still linger. From 1987 onwards, for electoral and ideological reasons, the national Labour Party moved further away from EOPs, dropping even its semblance of sympathy for lesbian and gay municipal policies.[22] This realignment was closely mirrored by Islington council leader, Margaret Hodge, who, in the late 1980s, adopted a high profile political role beyond her borough boundaries.

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[22] Similar changes occurred in the mid and late 1980s in Manchester, Haringey and Camden.

3. Extending the boundaries of municipal practice.

Did Islington council then do anything to improve the quality of life for its lesbian and gay residents, and users of its services? To what extent were such initiatives the work of the lesbian and gay committee? Or was the committee principally a `talking shop`, while the real work took place elsewhere?

The first set of initiatives I wish briefly to consider are those developments and policies I shall define as symbolic. Whilst some writers use this term in an explicitly derogatory manner, I have chosen a more neutral approach. By symbolic, I refer to those initiatives which ostensibly attempt to achieve change by prefiguring it through predominantly ideological means. For example, the committee's eventual decision to give lesbians precedence in their title was intended to symbolise lesbians' greater oppression and, hence, a commitment to prioritising their needs. Symbolic policies formed an important element of lesbian and gay committees' work for reasons discussed in chapter seven. In Islington they were much in evidence, as illustrated by the committee's attempt to introduce a `pink plaques` policy.

At the Advisory Working Party meeting, on 6 January 1983, Bob Crossman proposed that a commemorative plaque be erected in memory of the playwright Joe Orton and his partner, Kenneth Halliwell. The recommendation was referred to the Libraries Panel responsible, which replied that no more than one individual could be named on a single plaque, and that moreover, it was unnecessary to refer to Joe Orton's

sexuality.[23] The matter was settled, but two years later the committees clashed again, this time in relation to the Old Albany Trust Meeting House, one of the first modern homophile organisations in Britain. The Libraries Panel refused to install a plaque, this time on the grounds of budgetary limitations. The Sub-Committee requested they go ahead, promising to take responsibility for any costs incurred.[24]

The struggle between the Gay and Lesbian Sub-Committee and Libraries Panel over this issue of plaques illustrates the conflicting perceptions of different department and committees towards combatting anti-gay discrimination. Whilst the Libraries Panel strove to treat sexual orientation as an irrelevant detail, the Sub-Committee perceived its acknowledgement as vital in circumstances where it would produce positive role models or `images`.[25] `Pink plaques` were seen as a useful way of bringing to public attention the contribution lesbians and gays had made to cultural, social and political life; and moreover as a symbol of the council's recognition of such achievements.

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[23] Lesbian and Gay Advisory Working Party, Minutes, item 6, 12 July 1983. Jo.Orton's relations with Islington library service provide an excellent example of changing council policy. In the 1960s, he and Kenneth Halliwell were prosecuted and convicted for defacing library books. Twenty years later, those same books provided the contribution of Islington library service to `North London Lesbian and Gay Strength and Pride`.

[24] Gay and Lesbian Sub-Committee, Minutes, item 9c, 1 October 1985.

[25] Aside from the individualistic nature of most commemorative plaques, Albany Trust being an exception, the strategy raises questions as to the criteria used to determine who might be a `positive image` or role model. Another gay person celebrated by Islington council in the 1988 strength and pride festival was Benjamin Brittan.

Islington lesbian and gay committee also focused on developing a campaigning role, to use its public standing and formal municipal status to object to the discriminatory behaviour of other bodies. Examples include criticising the negative attitudes of the Independent Broadcasting Authority towards gay advertising on channel four, condemning police harassment of gay men and the lack of any police action when lesbians and gays were attacked.[26]

Other meetings discussed the deleterious implications for lesbians and gays of the Police and Criminal Act 1984,[27] and the work of the Criminal Law Revision Committee on Prostitution and Allied Offences. The committee expressed their concerns that the reduction in the maximum sentence for homosexual soliciting would paradoxically be detrimental to gays, by denying them their right to be tried before a jury.[28]

Yet despite such discussions, the extent of any subsequent action remained slight. The committee wrote letters but had little power to direct the council to take further action. Neither did it have the resources to mobilise community protest. Why did it then bother with such issues? Several reasons can be given, applicable also to other lesbian and gay committees. First, such a focus deflected attention away from the committee's inability to introduce internal change. Second, it is probable that institutional boundaries were of much less

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[26] Gay and Lesbian Advisory Working Party, Minutes, item 6 January 1983.

[27] Gay and Lesbian Sub-Committee, Minutes, item 8, 8 November 1983.

[28] Gay and Lesbian Sub-Committee, Minutes, item 7, 17 September 1984.

concern or relevance for those lesbian and gay committee members who were also community activists, than they were for Islington council.

The presence on the committee of voluntary sector representatives also boosted interest in community development and funding, in particular for a local lesbian and gay centre. The goal of establishing a lesbian and gay centre has been a common feature of municipal lesbian and gay politics across the country.[29] In Islington, from the first Gay and Lesbian Advisory Working Party meeting on 21 October 1982, work had already started to establish a local centre. Although discussions with the GLC had taken place concerning the possible location of the London Lesbian and Gay Centre (LLGC) in Islington, some local activists still felt it necessary to have a centre specifically for the borough's residents. In the financial year 1982/3, funding for a local centre was agreed within the council's capital programme and a bid was made by the lesbian and gay committee for staffing.[30] Meanwhile plans were progressing for the siting of the LLGC.

However, in September 1983, the Sub-Committee was informed that both projects could not go ahead and by November of that year it became

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[29] See Southampton Advisory Committee on Gay Rights, Minutes, item 6(i) 14 December 1984; ibid, Minutes, 31 January 1985, re: talk by LB Greenwich management training officer on establishment in Greenwich with council funding of lesbian and gay centre. Southampton Advisory Committee on Lesbian and Gay Citizens, Minutes, item 2(a) 17 December 1985. See also Manchester Gay Men's Sub-Committee, 1 April 1985; ibid, 25 November 1985; ibid, 10 November 1986; ibid, 27 July 1987; re: enlargement of existing centre and new premises and Manchester Lesbian Open Working Party, 10 February 1985; Manchester Lesbian Sub-Committee, 3 July 1985; and see interviews with Marilyn Taylor and Chris Root, on some of the reasons why a lesbian centre was never established.

[30] Gay and Lesbian Advisory Working Party, Minutes, item 7, a verbal report of the borough valuer, 6 January 1983.

clear that the council's capital budget was heavily overcommitted. In the light of such information, the committee relinquished the proposal for an Islington centre[31] leaving the LLGC to go ahead successfully.[32] However, according to Bob Crossman, the Islington centre was not abandoned simply through lack of resources. A major reason for the project's collapse was internal divisions.

> "People rowed about room allocations rather than discussing what role the centre was supposed to fulfil." (B. Crossman interview)

In its work, the committee considered not only the council's role as a direct provider, but also its responsibility for the practices of other organisations and bodies which benefitted from council assistance. One of the first proposals of the Gay and Lesbian Advisory Working Party was that firms receiving financial assistance from Islington council should promise to comply with the council's policy of non-discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation. The Working Party requested that the council's economic development service monitor firms to ensure compliance.[33] Yet, subsequently, it was reported that no such instructions to firms or monitoring had taken place.

A somewhat similar issue arose over the external use of council owned premises. Islington's Policy Committee resolved on 14 July 1983

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[31] Gay and Lesbian Sub-Committee, Minutes, items 9, 10, 8 November 1983.

[32] This was despite attempts by the Department of the Environment to halt a number of large grants, including one to the LLGC being made by the GLC under Section 137, Local Government Act 1972, in the lead-up to abolition. Gay and Lesbian Sub-Committee, Minutes, items 6 and 9, 27 March 1986.

[33] Gay and Lesbian Advisory Working Party, Minutes, item 4, 6 January 1983.

that the council would only prohibit the hire of their buildings to the National Front. The Gay and Lesbian Advisory Working Party argued this was too narrow. They proposed that the council should refuse to rent its premises to all groups with declared anti-gay views,[34] expressing their unease that organisations which contravened manifesto commitments could nevertheless hire council properties.[35] Again the committee was unsuccessful.

These two attempts to penalise discriminatory bodies demonstrate the tensions surrounding the full realisation of lesbian and gay equality.[36] Serious implementation of either proposal would have created an uproar amongst officers, community groups and local firms, as well as rendering the council vulnerable to legal challenge. Further, it would have necessitated an investment of staff time which the council leadership was unprepared to make. However this lack of support so early on in the life of the committee highlighted the limitations within which it operated.

> "The impression given was that the Sub-Committee was low down in the committee pecking order...Decisions were never acted upon and always had to go through other committees. This was very frustrating." (D. Dawson interview)

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[34] Gay and Lesbian Advisory Working Party, Minutes, item 9d, 5 May 1983.

[35] Gay and Lesbian Advisory Working Party, Minutes, item 4, 12 July 1983.

[36] See similar request of Southampton Advisory Committee on Lesbian and Gay Rights, Minutes, item 6, 31 January 1985. The committee requested that the council withdraw their custom from the company who printed the council magazine as the same company refused to accept gay advertisements for Portsmouth News. The council agreed to look into the matter and as a result the Portsmouth News started to accept gay advertisements.

The degree to which departments took responsibility for developing lesbian and gay policies varied enormously. Some services, such as libraries (and later arts and entertainments) pursued work in this area, occasionally reporting to the lesbian and gay committee on progress made.[37] In libraries, initiatives developed included stocking books of lesbian and gay interest, displaying exhibitions such as the Hall Carpenter archives, consulting with the gay community as part of a broader consultative strategy, and adapting the library classificatory system so that homosexuality did not come within the psychology classification.[38]

Departments like the library service were however an exception. Most took a less pro-active role and the emergence of any policy depended on constant scrutiny by the lesbian and gay committee, asking for reports and making recommendations. Attempts were made to systematise this process.[39] According to Bob Crossman:

> "I wanted annual reviews so that lesbian and gay issues would become part of the programming process for the budget."[40]

Yet by early 1984, the main services had shown little response, despite the introduction of lead officers on lesbian and gay issues within their departments.[41] Part of the problem was that officers did

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[37] Interview with Bob Crossman.

[38] Interview with Stan Marshall; and see Gay and Lesbian Sub-Committee, Minutes, item 11, 10 July 1985.

[39] Gay and Lesbian Advisory Working Party, Minutes, AOB, 6 January 1983; ibid, Minutes, item 8g, 5 May 1983.

[40] Interview with Bob Crossman.

[41] Gay and Lesbian Sub-Committee, Minutes, item 5, 2 April 1984.

not really understand what they were supposed to include within lesbian and gay reports. Consequently, when ones were produced, they tended to be defensive,[42] limited to assuring members that discrimination did not take place in the services they provided.[43] In his interview, Bob Crossman stated:

> "It took three years to get a report from housing and then it said there were no issues and it wasn't a priority."[44]

The process of receiving reports from the major services also made any form of dialogue impossible. Departments reporting would neglect to respond to the actual recommendations and issues raised by the lesbian and gay committee. This, combined with a time lag and the frequent failure of departmental officers to attend lesbian and gay committee meetings even when formally requested to do so, substantially limited the lesbian and gay committee's ability to implement change. David Dawson, co-optee, stated:

> The time factor was very hard. The fact issues couldn't be handled by the Gay and Lesbian Sub-Committee slowed down the process. By the time the issue came back (to committee) the impetus had gone."[45]

In conclusion, it would seem that the popular image of Islington council during this period bore little resemblance to the reality. Development and implementation of lesbian and gay policies remained minimal and those which made progress owed more to individual officer initiative than to the lesbian and gay committee. The committee also

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[42] Ibid, Minutes, item 6, 10 July 1985.

[43] Ibid, Minutes, item 6, 17 September 1984.

[44] Interview with Bob Crossman.

[45] Interview with David Dawson.

had little success in raising public awareness of lesbian and gay rights. Amongst officers, few knew of the committee's work[46] and awareness amongst the general public was undoubtedly even lower.

In his period as mayor, Bob Crossman gave lesbian and gay municipal issues a higher profile, but this had little direct impact on the work of the committee. What did have an impact, however, was the media hysteria which followed his mayoralty, "making work in this area even more difficult...as the shutters were pulled down".[47] The gay and lesbian committee continued to meet, but despite departmental initiatives, such as Arts and Entertainments' support for the annual North London strength and pride festival, it was never to have the impact or success for which it had wished.

C. NOTTINGHAM CITY COUNCIL.

The second authority I wish to consider is Nottingham City Council. Located in the north-east Midlands, Nottingham has a population of just over 268,000,[48] almost eight per cent of whom are from minority ethnic communities.[49] The city council which is the focus of this discussion is a second tier authority. The first tier, Nottingham County Council has responsibility for many key services. Nottingham City Council re-elects a third of its seats every year (except the year of the European

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[46] Interview with Paul Barnett.

[47] Interview with Bob Crossman.

[48] This figure is based on the 1981 census. See OPCS County Monitor, publication of the Government Statistical Service, 26 January 1982.

[49] Ibid.

elections). In recent years it has tended to be ruled by very slim majorities, with at different times, Labour, Conservative and Communist Party councillors holding the balance of power.

Sexual orientation was included in the city council's EOP statement before the 1983 municipal elections.[50] However, it was those local elections and their aftermath which led to the authority's development of lesbian and gay policies[51] As in Islington, the Labour Party fought the elections on a manifesto which included a commitment to lesbian and gay rights.

Yet despite such inclusion, commitment to the policy within the party was very uneven, as Richard McCance discovered when he came to fight the election as an openly gay man.[52] What support there was came mainly from heterosexual proponents of a broad left position. However, for them, lesbian and gay rights was only one amongst a number of issues that needed to be pushed forward.[53]

In May 1983, Labour was returned with a majority of one. Yet it was this wafer thin majority, paradoxically, which facilitated lesbian and gay policy development by the city council. McCance, the only `out` gay councillor, was able to use his vote as a lever to promote lesbian and gay initiatives. It was a bargaining chip that McCance used several

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[50] Interview with Harry Joshua.

[51] See B. Cant (1991:165).

[52] Interview with Richard McCance.

[53] Ibid.

times between 1983 and 1987.[54] Successful in the short term,[55] in the long run it backfired, losing him the support of many colleagues in the Labour group and party.[56]

1. Encouraging community participation.

The equal opportunity unit that Nottingham began to establish in 1983, went beyond the leadership's initial aim for a limited, low profile structure with just a co-ordinator and secretary. First to be appointed were a women's officer and race equality officer, raising the question whether there should be someone to deal with issues of sexual orientation.[57] The already established Gay Men's Working Group argued for two posts, one to address the needs of gay men and a comparable post for lesbians. The council rejected this proposal, claiming that the balance of the unit - one worker for each `oppression` - would be upset. Eventually, a compromise of one job share post was agreed.

The process of establishing Nottingham's Gay and Lesbian Sub-Committee, which reported, along with other equalities committees, to a full Equalities Committee, followed a similar path to that taken by lesbian and gay committees in other authorities. A series of public

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[54] For example, McCance voted against and thereby defeated the leadership's budgetary proposals. At another time he threatened to resign which would have forced a by-election thereby jeopardising Labour's leadership.

[55] For example, McCance managed to win agreement for a sub-committee rather than working party which was the leadership's preference.

[56] Interview with Richard McCance.

[57] Interview with Harry Joshua.

meetings were held, attended by local lesbians, gay men and Labour councillors. At this early stage, community activists agreed not to demand that lesbians and gay men have two separate committees and there appeared, according to Jo Fraser, then lesbian officer, a readiness amongst men and women in the community to try and work together.[58] However, with the sub-committee in place, consultation meetings with lesbians and gay men tended to take place separately and the two groups developed in different directions.

In common with lesbian and gay committees elsewhere, Nottingham's Sub-Committee stressed the importance of community involvement.[59] Thus, in addition to five councillors, also on the committee were five gay male and five lesbian representatives thereby ensuring community co-optees had a two to one majority. This contrasted with normal council practice where the tendency was to make sure the ruling party had a workable majority. Other measures to reduce the formal, bureaucratic nature of the committee and to encourage community participation included rotating the chair between two or more individuals and protecting the identity of co-optees by deleting their names from minutes.[60] Nevertheless, despite these measures, involvement from Nottingham's gay and lesbian communities in the Sub-Committee's work

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[58] Interview with Jo Fraser.

[59] Co-optees were important since with one exception, none of the other councillors were openly gay. A similar situation existed in most other authorities that developed lesbian and gay work. Almost none had more than two or three `out` council members.

[60] See letter from a gay men's representative to the chief executive, 12 December 1984.

remained marginal.[61] Yet, amongst those who did participate, significant enthusiasm existed, at least initially.[62] Nottingham co-optees took on a large part of the committee's paperwork, writing reports on issues they considered important and trying to participate to the fullest extent.[63]

2. Conflict and tension.

As time wore on, lesbian and gay co-optees and support staff found themselves, as in Islington, increasingly at odds with the council leadership. This development was to affect profoundly the Sub-Committee's future. According to lesbian officer, Jo Fraser:

> "The structures would be used by councillors to stop (us doing) things. It became a matter of `us` and `them`...the community also saw the councillors as them."[64]

The emerging tensions between the lesbian and gay community, and council came to a head over a series of issues, one of which involved the project for a Nottingham lesbian and gay centre.

In 1985/6 the Sub-Committee requested a report on the project's progress which was written and then withdrawn on the instructions of a Labour councillor ostensibly because it was not in accordance with the

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[61] Interview with Richard McCance. See also Gay and Lesbian Sub-Committee, Minutes, item 52, 7 November 1985.

[62] Interviews with Richard McCance and Jo Fraser.

[63] Co-optees took their position sufficiently seriously to express concern over late agenda papers and to request in future they be notified individually of any delays (something councillors rarely received); Gay and Lesbian Sub-Committee, Minutes, item 46, 7 November 1985.

[64] Interview with Jo Fraser.

committee's request. The committee perceived such action as over-riding their prerogative and passed a resolution censuring the Labour group for its unjustified interference. The minutes of 6 February 1986 refer to the meeting's `abhorrence at an attempt by the Labour group to suppress discussion` which was `regarded...as a flagrant breach of trust`.[65] The issue took up the entire meeting. All other matters were deferred. The dispute continued at the next Sub-Committee when the decision of the Equal Opportunities Committee neither to confirm nor adopt the Sub-Committee's motion of censure was deplored.[66]

Eventually, the report on the centre was presented and addressed. However, the ructions between the Sub-Committee and council had revealed a number of problems. First, that the Sub-Committee had little formal power if the Equalities Committee to whom they reported refused to offer support. Second, that the Sub-Committee's insecurity, its concern with status and `insubordination` could detract from other work. In this instance, a procedural slight had been allowed to take up a disproportionate amount of time and energy.

Meanwhile, another division was intensifying, this time between lesbians and gay men on the committee. On 10 April 1986, Sub-Committee members heard a report from lesbian representatives on the lesbian open day, a community-oriented event held the preceding month, at which

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[65] Gay and Lesbian Sub-Committee, minutes, item 96, 6 February 1986.

[66] Gay and Lesbian Sub-Committee, Minutes, item 112, 6 March 1986.

lesbians had stated their preference for a separate sub-committee.[67] The reason given was that the current Sub-Committee was perceived as too large and formal for many representatives to feel comfortable making contributions. However, the main cause of the proposed split was lesbians' perceptions that they had little in common with gay men and more with other groups of women.[68]

Although the Sub-Committee accepted the proposal and the gay male representatives stated they had no objections in principle,[69] lesbian officer, Jo Fraser, claims its achievement was a struggle. This was not only for ideological reasons. Both councillors and officers saw the division into two committees as meaning twice as much work.[70] For the ten months of its existence, the Lesbian Sub-Committee maintained a low profile, barely noticed by the rest of the council. However, two actions by the Gay Men's Sub-Committee re-opened previous tensions, leading to a level of media interest that alarmed the Labour leadership protecting a one seat majority, with the 1987 council elections drawing ever nearer.

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[67] It was proposed that the Lesbian Sub-Committee consist of three councillors and five co-optees with the same terms of reference as for the joint committee, except that `gay men` be deleted where appropriate.

[68] Gay and Lesbian Sub-Committee, Report, item 8, 10 April 1986. Part of the problem, although not minuted, was the behaviour of gay men at meetings. According to Jo Fraser when interviewed, lesbians present at committee meetings were becoming increasingly irritated at the level of sexual innuendo enjoyed by the men present.

[69] See Gay and lesbian Sub-Committee, Minutes, item 194, 10 April 1986; ibid, Minutes, item 157, 8 May 1986.

[70] Ibid.

The first, and less publicly controversial event, concerned a magazine produced for gay pride 1986 which was sent out with the agenda for the June 1986 Sub-Committee meeting. A Conservative councillor complained about receiving the material and in turn received an apology from the chief executive for the magazine's distribution. At the committee's September meeting, the chief executive reported that, as a result of the incident, a review would be instituted on the procedure for compiling agendas to ensure a similar embarrassing incident did not reoccur. In his report, the chief executive expressed the leadership's concerns at the behaviour of the gay men's representatives. By doing so and by condoning Conservative outrage, the chief executive affirmed the presumption that explicit gay material was offensive. In turn co-optees expressed anxiety about the future censoring of material on AIDS, and began to wonder, not for the first time, what commitment Nottingham City Council truly possessed to challenging the discrimination they faced.[71]

The second incident, which did receive national media attention, involved the introduction of gay men's swimming sessions. Derided by sections of the council, it was seen by the Gay Men's Sub-Committee as no different to the separate swimming provision offered to other groups in the community.[72] However, coming as it did in the midst of the `AIDS panic`, it provided a focus for intensified anti-gay rhetoric amongst local opponents of the council's EOPs. The leadership, furious at the level of publicity and opposition being aroused, demanded the scheme be

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[71] Gay Men's Sub-Committee, Minutes, item 42, 11 September 1986.

[72] Interview with Richard McCance.

axed. In turn McCance threatened to resign.[73] The swimming sessions were allowed to continue, but due to the public limelight, few gay men used them. Eventually, through lack of attendance the scheme was discontinued.[74]

In March 1987, during this uproar, Ben Benson, the gay men's officer tendered his resignation. In an interview with the press shortly afterwards, he explained that although he was largely leaving for personal reasons, his decision had been influenced both by the behaviour of senior officers who did not support equal opportunities and by the `obstinacy` of some councillors.[75]

In May 1987 the local elections gave the Conservative Party control of the council and, as they had promised, the equal opportunities unit was closed down and its committees abolished. Jo Fraser, the lesbian officer remained until the end, but, like Ben Benson, she had become increasingly unhappy with the council's treatment of lesbian and gay issues.

> "It went from a positive, achieving atmosphere to the opposite - very negative and static. By the end we knew that should Labour return (after the 1987 elections) they wouldn't support the policies to the same extent." (J. Fraser interview)

Richard McCance did not stand again. His experience of trying to maintain the council's commitment to lesbian and gay issues had left him disillusioned and exhausted.

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[73] Ibid.

[74] Gay Men's Sub-Committee, Minutes, item 119, 12 March 1987.

[75] Saturday Evening Post, 14 March 1987.

"Most of the sub-committee's energy went into surviving...Not much pro-active work was carried out...and little was achieved...The committee existed to prove a point. It was an endurance test for four (sic) years...People didn't realise how slow it was and how much hard work was needed to get something to happen...It just ground on so that even filling up an agenda became a problem." (R. McCance interview)

3. Employing liberal paradigms.

As in other authorities, Nottingham's Gay and Lesbian Sub-Committee encountered the problem of having to adapt to employment strategies developed for other disadvantaged groups or otherwise risk achieving no benefits at all.[76] A policy such as `targeting`, for example, applicable for `visible` identities such as women and Black people, was less appropriate for lesbians and gays who might be neither visible nor `out`. Furthermore, amending employment codes of practice was a long drawn out procedure. For those community representatives who actually felt able to contribute to the discussion, it meant investing time and energy on an issue whose practical benefit for their community was minimal. Moreover, for all the participation that took place, the committee felt little progress had actually been made on improving conditions for lesbian and gay employees.[77]

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[76] The dilemma of developing an employment strategy is evident in the question of a co-optee on Southampton's committee to the personnel manager asking whether there were any `open` gays in high positions. To this, the manager replied he did not know, since there were no records on people's sexuality; Advisory Committee on Lesbian and Gay Rights, Minutes, item 4, 5 March 1985. Within a framework where similar questions were being asked regarding employment of women and Black people, the question made sense, yet it overlooked whether the committee and lesbians and gays employed would really want a personnel department to have that kind of information.

[77] Gay Men's Sub-Committee, Report, Priorities for 1986-7, 31 July 1986. Though see also ibid, Minutes, item 119, 12 March 1987 in which it was felt some progress had been achieved in complaints procedures and see Lesbian Sub-Committee, Minutes, item 18, 4 September 1986 which

It was within this context of work on employment issues that a dispute arose between the Lesbian Sub-Committee and Gay Men's Sub-Committee over the continuing use of the term `sexual orientation` within the council's equal opportunities statement. Lesbian representatives expressed their objections on the grounds that the phrase was an `umbrella term` which `lumps lesbians together with male practices with which they have nothing in common` and which `suggests lesbianism is only about who we have sexual relationships with`.[78] Instead, they advocated the use of `lesbian or gay`, in order to make as explicit as possible on public documents what the council's EOP actually entailed.

Yet, in contrast to other authorities where this debate was played out, the Gay Men's Sub-Committee did not accede to the lesbian representatives' request. The men argued from a pluralist position which did not engage with the women's attack on reductionism that removal of the term `sexual orientation` could lead to the exclusion of equality of opportunity for other groups defined by their sexual identity, including heterosexuals. Nevertheless, they proposed what they deemed a compromise - the word `sexuality` - and asked the Lesbian Sub-Committee for their comments.[79] The matter went backwards and forwards between the two committees but time was running out and it was

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welcomed the draft policy on harassment and discrimination as a positive step. Workforce figures presented to the Gay Men's Sub-Committee, Minutes, item 86, 11 December 1986, revealed, however, a continuing lack of representation in the workforce of certain sections of the community.

[78] Lesbian Sub-Committee, Minutes, item 33, 6 November 1986.

[79] Gay Men's Sub-Committee, Minutes, item 84, 11 December 1986.

never to be resolved to their, or the council's, satisfaction before the Sub-Committees were abandoned.

4. Campaigning for equality.

In the previous section on Islington, I discussed the emergence and development of symbolic initiatives. In Nottingham, these became a major aspect of the committees' work in an attempt to challenge conceptions of homosexuality as unacceptable and abnormal. Two illustrations demonstrate the committees' approach. The first was the resolution that lesbian and gay representatives be invited to participate in Remembrance Day ceremonies since lesbians and gays were amongst those killed in World War Two.[80]

The second attempt to be included within the mainstream and thus to be acknowledged as a legitimate, respectable section of the community concerned Nottingham council's `twinning` activities. Initially, the Gay and Lesbian Sub-Committee proposed that links be established with lesbians and gays in the twinned city.[81] Subsequently, this was extended to a request that the next civic delegation to Harare (one of the twinned cities) should include a lesbian representative.[82]

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[80] Gay and Lesbian Sub-Committee, Minutes, item 58, 7 November 1985.

[81] Gay and Lesbian Sub-Committee, Minutes, item 70, 5 December 1985.

[82] Ibid, Minutes, item 93, 6 February 1986. This request was dropped during a discussion of the minutes at the subsequent committee meeting; Gay and Lesbian Sub-Committee, Minutes, item 112, 6 March 1986.

This focus on what was perceived by many as minor, tangential issues lost, for the lesbians and gays involved, some of the support and respect of people who neither understood nor saw the value of symbolic gestures and positive images. That the committees took this direction was partly, as in Islington, due to the enormous difficulty in achieving substantive change or even in developing a more productive working relationship with most service departments. Whilst the leadership perceived these kinds of initiatives as harmless, the committees' diversion from more traditional municipal issues left them vulnerable to charges of `wasting rate-payers money`.

Alongside attempts to create positive images, the committees also prioritised solidarity work. These included letters of support for Simon Nkholi, Chair of the Gay Association of South African Students,[83] greetings to the Asian Gay Conference in Tokyo,[84] and support for a funding application for an Irish delegation to address a meeting in Nottingham on the treatment of prisoners in Northern Ireland.[85] The Sub-Committees also offered support to local solidarity groups which had sprung up within the lesbian and gay movement in response to the miners and print workers' strikes.[86]

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[83] Gay and Lesbian Sub-Committee, Minutes, item 71, 5 December 1985.

[84] Ibid, Minutes, item 118, 6 March 1986.

[85] Ibid, Minutes, item 28, 5 September 1985.

[86] The Sub-Committee requested funds to display an exhibition produced by Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners`; Gay and Lesbian Sub-Committee, Minutes, item 130, 6 March 1986. The Leisure Committee however refused the request; Gay Men's Sub-Committee, Minutes, item 22, 31 July 1986.

Individual grievances were taken up, such as the harassment of a gay postal worker[87] and a law student's complaint of homophobia by his department.[88] Support was also given to national campaigns against recalcitrant authorities, in particular Nottingham County Council, which, despite being Labour controlled, refused to include lesbians and gay men in its EOP in contravention of its manifesto commitments (see chapter two). The Gay and Lesbian Sub-Committee raised the matter of the county council's intransigence at a number of meetings, first, with the suggestion that links be made to help establish county lesbian and gay policies,[89] later, to demand that the council be pressurised to implement their manifesto promises.[90]

5. Funding raised expectations.

In common with other lesbian and gay committees, Nottingham's Gay and Lesbian Sub-Committee tried to provide assistance to local groups. Because the committee did not possess its own budget, support took the form of backing bids to other committees[91] and providing help in kind.[92]

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[87] Gay and Lesbian Sub-Committee, Minutes, item 55, 7 November 1985.

[88] Gay and Lesbian Sub-Committee, Minutes, item 168, 8 May 1986; also Lesbian Sub-Committee, Minutes, item 42, 6 November 1986.

[89] Gay and Lesbian Sub-Committee, Minutes, item 15g, 9 May 1985. Lesbian representatives who raised the matter were told by councillors present at the meeting that since the County Council elections had only just been held, it would be premature to push the matter.

[90] Gay and Lesbian Sub-Committee, Minutes, item 135, 6 March 1986. See also Gay Men's Sub-Committee, Minutes, item 54, 9 October 1986.

[91] Gay and Lesbian Sub-Committee, Minutes, item 14, 9 May 1985; ibid, Minutes, item 8, 6 June 1985.

The main focus, however, was on obtaining support from central government, either through the Inner Area Programme (IAP), a scheme intended principally for capital intensive, economic projects in urban districts or through the Manpower Services Commission (MSC) which paid salaries for staff on short term contracts in community projects.

The Nottingham Gay People's Co-operative, hoping to establish a lesbian and gay centre, was one such organisation the Sub-Committee directed towards central government funding.[93] Others, such as Lesbian Line, also applied, seeing this as their only hope in an environment of stringent local government financial constraints. The Sub-Committee's optimism even went so far as to pressurise the chair of the Inner Area Programme Committee to facilitate a city-wide meeting for lesbians and gays on such governmental funding opportunities.[94]

The response from central government, when it came, was predictable. The Agency manager responsible for allocating Manpower Services Commission funds informed the Nottingham Gay People's Co-operative that their submission for development workers would not be approved on the grounds that funding such a project might bring the programme into

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[92] For example, finding low cost premises, providing publicity and a civic reception for a winter festival and congress of the Lesbian and Gay Youth Movement; Gay and Lesbian Sub-Committee, Minutes, item 35b, 8 October 1985. Richard McCance, in his interview, described how "councillors had to be dragged to the reception".

[93] Gay and Lesbian Sub-Committee Minutes, item 50, 7 November 1985; ibid, Minutes, item 124, 6 March 1986. See also Gay Men's Sub-Committee, Minutes, item 41, 11 September 1986.

[94] Gay and Lesbian Sub-Committee, Minutes, item 45, 7 November 1985; ibid, Minutes, item 61, 5 December 1985. See also Gay and Lesbian Sub-Committee, Minutes, item 36, report of the chief executive on opportunities for lesbians and gay men through IAP, 8 October 1985.

public controversy or disrepute.[95] Similarly Department of the Environment officials made it clear that their Minister would not look favourably at gay projects.

Why, then, did officers and councillors encourage gay and lesbian groups to apply for IAP and MSC funding, knowing they would be extremely unlikely to be successful? Harry Joshua, co-ordinator of the equal opportunities unit at the time, argues it was because nobody wanted to say `no`.[96] Perhaps also that to have done so would have placed the council under pressure to make funding available out of its own capital and revenue programme. However, raising expectations in this way undermined community development, resulting in a waste of organisational time and resources. For the Gay People's Co-operative, by the time they realised funds from central government would not be forthcoming, property prices had rocketed and self-financing was no longer a viable option.[97]

6. Struggling to amend policies and provision.

Even before the establishment of the Gay and Lesbian Sub-Committee, issues concerning housing provision for lesbians and gays were being raised.[98] A key issue involved council housing succession: what would

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[95] Gay Men's Sub-Committee, Minutes, item 82, 11 December 1986. See also Lesbian Sub-Committee, Minutes, item 22, the response to Lesbian Line, 4 September 1986.

[96] Interview with Harry Joshua.

[97] Interview with Richard McCance.

[98] See Gay and Lesbian Sub-Committee, Minutes, item 7, 4 April 1985.

happen to the surviving partner in a gay or lesbian relationship when the person named on the tenancy agreement died? This was becoming a growing concern within the gay male community with the rise in AIDS related deaths. Lesbians and gay men demanded parity with married couples for whom rights of succession already existed.[99]

At the Sub-Committee meeting in July 1985, the director of housing responded by suggesting that same sex partnerships should take out a joint tenancy. Only in this way would such relationships `whether lesbian, gay or friend` be given legal rights of survivorship.[100] The director's response did not satisfy the committee. Rights of succession were not only of practical, but also symbolic importance, asserting equality between gay and heterosexual relationships. It was felt that underlying the director's position was the view that homosexuals were on the whole promiscuous, unlikely to have long-term stable relationships, and that therefore succession rights were inappropriate. According to Richard McCance:

> "The right to succession was a real battle. We got minor concessions leading to a wider interpretation of housing policy in its practical application. But the chair of Housing was not supportive.[101]

AIDS was another issue which frequently arose on the Sub-Committee's agenda, usually at the request of gay male representatives.[102] In

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[99] Gay and Lesbian Sub-Committee, Minutes, item 9, 6 June 1985.

[100] Ibid, Minutes, item 16, 4 July 1985.

[101] Interview with Richard McCance.

[102] Gay and Lesbian Sub-Committee, Minutes, item 17, 4 July 1985; ibid, Minutes, item 34, 8 October 1985; ibid, Minutes, item 68, 7 November 1985.

discussion of the 1986/7 work programme, AIDS was identified as a priority area,[103] and it was resolved to set up a group to forge links with other agencies also tackling AIDS.[104] By December 1986, an interim report had been produced[105] and requests were being made for voluntary sector funding, publicity, information and an AIDS co-ordinator.[106]

Nottingham City Council's AIDS initiatives appear to have been more successful than lesbian and gay work with the housing department. Also more successful was the Sub-Committee and support officers' work with the arts and leisure departments. Partly, this was due to the more community-oriented ethos of arts provision, but also, as Richard McCance suggests, because they could respond more easily to sections of the community such as lesbians and gays without it interfering with their mainstream work.[107]

> "Arts and entertainments is safe. They can put on a week of films for lesbians and gay men."(R. McCance interview)

For lesbian and gay Sub-Committee members, leisure and entertainments provision was achievable. It was also a visible benefit to members of their communities not involved with the Sub-Committees' work. However,

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[103] Gay Men's Sub-Committee, Report, re: Priorities (a), 31 July 1986.

[104] Ibid, Minutes, item 39, 11 September 1986.

[105] Ibid, Minutes, item 85, 11 December 1986. One recommendation was that Gay Switchboard be allowed to place stickers in public toilets.

[106] Ibid, Minutes, item 97, 13 January 1987.

[107] This kind of pluralist model of provision would not be the case, for example, with education, where changes to the school curriculum would affect everybody.

even here, obstacles were encountered, particularly in relation to requests to participate in mainstream arts events.[108]

In conclusion, Nottingham City Council's Gay and Lesbian Sub-Committee, like other similar committees, spent its life making suggestions and proposals which for the most part never came to fruition. In the case of initiatives which began to be developed, time and resources were deployed with minimal results. Lesbian and gay issues had been forced on the council by a few Labour Party activists; more specifically, by one, openly gay, councillor, who, because of the political balance, could use his vote to some effect. Yet the lack of widespread support, commitment and understanding amongst Labour councillors meant the gay and lesbian Sub-Committees were given little assistance in their battles with the officer hierarchy. Rather, councillors tended to take the side of senior officers, seeing the Sub-Committees first as an irrelevance and then increasingly as a political embarrassment that could cost them control of the council. It is a moot point whether the defeat suffered by Nottingham Labour Party in the 1987 municipal elections was due to the gay and lesbian Sub-Committees and the political capital made out of them by the Conservative Party locally. However, it is likely that the Labour leadership's electoral position was not assisted by their silence on the matter, neither

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[108] An example of this was the attempt by the Sub-Committee to participate in the 1986 Nottingham festival. The Sub-Committee was requested to submit proposals to the Leisure Committee for lesbian and gay events. Subsequently, they were informed, having submitted proposals, that the proposals were too late as the festival programme had already been finalised. See Gay and Lesbian Sub-Committee, Minutes, item 69, 15 December 1985; ibid, Minutes, item 86, 9 January 1986; Gay Men's Sub-Committee, Minutes, item 119(5), 12 March 1987.

disbanding the Sub-Committees, nor publicly supporting and justifying them.

D. LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN.

Finally, I turn to the London Borough of Camden. Situated in the Capital's West End and extending north, Camden has a population of approximately 183,000.[109] one-third of whom come from minority ethnic communities.[110] Residents in the borough reflect a range of incomes from the very affluent districts of Hampstead and Highgate to the poorer inner city areas. Camden also possesses a large number of politically active communities, including gays and lesbians. During the period of this research, Labour held the borough council with a sizeable majority. As in Islington, local government elections take place every four years, and the council is a single tier authority, running all its service with the exception (until the abolition of ILEA) of education.

Since Camden's lesbian and gay structures were established later than in Islington and Nottingham, by the end of the period studied developments were still in their early stages. My focus therefore is on the ways in which Camden began its lesbian and gay work, rather than on what followed. Having learned from experiences elsewhere, Camden's approach was arguably the most sophisticated - politically and bureaucratically. Nevertheless, many of the same problems experienced elsewhere were encountered.

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[109] A.L.A., London Government Directory, 1988.

[110] Ibid.

1. Preliminary work.

The initial impetus for municipal lesbian and gay initiatives came, in Camden, from several directions. Since the early 1980s an informal officer group had been working on lesbian and gay issues within the council alongside an active NALGO lesbian and gay group. In addition, a lesbian working group of local community activists were also placing pressure on the council. In 1985, backed by Sandra Plummer (the only openly lesbian or gay councillor in Camden), they proposed the establishment of a lesbian and gay unit, to provide a comparable structure to the existing women's support unit.

Despite support for a lesbian and gay unit, and committee from staff groups and community activists, the local Labour Party remained reticent. This contrasted with the situation in other authorities, particularly Haringey and Manchester, where Labour Party members played an important role.[111] Nevertheless, it is doubtful whether much would have happened in Camden without the work of Labour Party member and councillor, Sandra Plummer. In her role as chair of Staff and Management Services she was able to bring together the disparate groups of interested lesbians and gays. She was also able to allocate funds for the employment of two temporary workers to research into the needs of lesbians and gay men in the borough.

The initial deployment of researchers prior to establishing an organisational framework was a device not utilised in the other

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[111] This contrasts with Nottingham and Islington where pressure came from individual councillors and a few others rather than significant party support existing.

authorities examined here.[112] Perhaps because Camden already had lesbian and gay working groups within or connected to the council, it did not perceive establishing a formal committee as a first step. Also, because Camden's goal was more ambitious - to institute a full lesbian and gay unit - it was considered necessary to lay fully the groundwork in advance.

The two research workers commenced employment on 4 May 1985 with the brief of identifying the `self-perceived` needs of lesbian and gay communities in the borough, and from there to make recommendations concerning both service provision and Camden's role as an employer. Careful thought had gone into making the research project as successful as possible. It reported directly to the most senior council committee - Policy and Resources. It was hoped that this would facilitate progress and was also intended to symbolise the seriousness with which the research project's work was being taken. Monitored by a support group chaired by Sandra Plummer, the project acquired a close nexus of experienced, committed council officers and an influential chair who could help steer recommendations through the most appropriate, effective channels. Terms of reference were broad so the researchers would not be constrained, and access was formally granted to chief officers and other senior staff.[113]

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[112] It was however adopted by Haringey in 1985, prior to the establishment of a committee and unit there in 1986. Other London authorities also followed subsequently, partly because it was easier to win agreement for two temporary posts, than the immediate establishment of several permanent ones.

[113] See Note, chief officers board, November 1985.

The two project workers - one male, one female - listened to and recorded the issues raised by many different people, presenting them in an interim report in January 1986. Simultaneously, the project began to draw up the rudiments of an organisational structure.

> "People talked about a unit from the beginning. That was the expectation. We had absorbed municipal values to know we wanted a unit like the women's unit. People in the borough wanted paid workers, but weren't clear whether they should be in the voluntary sector or based in the council. They didn't know the difference. We interpreted it as council workers." (J. Skeates interview)

The initial plan was for a lesbian and gay unit of six staff with a lesbian and a gay officer working in each of three areas - employment, service provision and community development.[114] However, this proposal was soon extended. Local lesbians, meeting separately from gay men, demanded a separate unit reporting to a lesbian sub-committee.[115] This would then feed into a full lesbian and gay committee. Sandra Plummer gave her support to these proposals.[116] However, when the matter came to the Labour group shortly before the 1986 borough elections, a number of Labour councillors expressed concerns and suggested it would be better to have a lesbian and gay sub-committee reporting to a full equalities committee.[117] This would be less resource intensive and minimise attention in the run-up to the elections.[118]

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[114] Majority Group, Report, Lesbian and Gay Issues, March 1986.

[115] Interview with Jane Skeates.

[116] Ibid.

[117] Interview with Sandra Plummer.

[118] Ibid.

No final arrangement was made, and in May 1986, the local elections took place. Camden Labour Party fought them with a `radical` manifesto that included several specific commitments to lesbians and gay men.[119] Yet despite the progressive nature of the manifesto, the political balance within the local Labour Party was changing,[120] reflected in the new council leadership and composition of the Labour group.[121] According to left-wing councillor, Sandra Plummer:

> "The Labour Co-ordinating Committee (the new leadership) wanted the stress on service delivery to white men, to allow managers to manage efficiently and believed that since equal opportunities had been achieved there was no need for committees."[122]

However, for the lesbian and gay research project in the late spring and early summer of 1986, the new political balance was yet to make an impact as the project's report and recommendations successfully weaved their way through the council's committee structure. On 3 July 1986, they were finally presented at Policy and Resources Committee.

The report described the widespread cynicism and anger of lesbians and gay men at the level of support offered to them by the council. Its recommendations took up the proposal made by lesbians at public meetings for two separate units arguing this was necessary to maintain the relatively high level of women's involvement and to demonstrate recognition of the `double` oppression lesbians faced. Each unit, it

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[119] Interview with Sandra Plummer.

[120] Ibid. The Labour Co-ordinating Committee took control of Holborn and St. Pancras Constituency Labour Party and of the Local Government Committee.

[121] Ibid.

[122] Ibid.

was proposed, should have eight workers. There should be an AIDS worker located outside the gay men's unit to co-ordinate AIDS work and a full committee on lesbian and gay issues.

Policy and Resources agreed the full committee with a membership of two-thirds councillors, one-third co-optees.[123] However, although it agreed two separate units with a target of eight workers in each by the end of the four year term, the committee resolved that due to the current financial situation for the immediate future there would be one joint unit of only four workers.[124]

The decision satisfied neither the two project workers nor the lesbians and gay men involved. Mindful of the newly established lesbian and gay unit in Haringey with six officers, an administrator, and a support worker for one of the officers who was blind, the project continued to argue for more posts. But Policy and Resources Committee were not prepared to agree more monies immediately. They compromised with a commitment to fund four additional officers to be appointed within the forthcoming financial year 1987/8.[125]

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[123] This was the maximum proportion of co-optees permitted by statute for a full standing committee; Policy and Resources Committee, Report, Camden Lesbian and Gay Project, 3 July 1986. See also Policy and Resources Committee, 26 November 1986, at which it was agreed that a majority of the co-optees should be women, with proper representation of black and minority ethnic and disabled lesbians and gay men.

[124] Policy and Resources Committee, Minutes, report of the lesbian and gay project, 3 July 1986.

[125] Policy and Resources Committee, Minutes, report of the lesbian and gay project, 26 November 1986.

2. Further problems.

The generally positive response of the council to the lesbian and gay research project gave added momentum to the lesbians and gay men involved. At open meetings, attendance levels were high and participants enthusiastic.[126] Discussions were begun to sort out the co-optee structure. Both project workers and community activists argued for the most representative and accessible structure possible. But right in the middle of the election process, with the gay men's co-optees already chosen, a dispute erupted that was to leave the lesbian and gay committee without co-optees for the entire period under examination.

> "There were to be two elections and the gay men elected two people. The lesbians were to have four and there was a row over how to get all the issues covered. The lesbian representative from the Women's Committee made a speech about the co-optees boycotting the Women's Committee and it was decided by the meeting not to appoint co-optees until that matter had been resolved. So it was decided not to have the male co-optees until the lesbians had decided... As a result of politics and personalities it fell to bits. People knew the co-optees would have no effect because of the fourteen councillors (sitting on the committee)... The issue alienated people so they never bothered with the committee. That led to the end of community representation."(J. Skeates interview)

Meanwhile, another major blow was to hit the work of the lesbian and gay unit[127] and committee in the summer and autumn of 1987. With the Conservative general election victory, many authorities found themselves forced to reconsider their financial position since

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[126] Interviews with Sandra Plummer and Jane Skeates.

[127] The four workers were in post on 1 April 1987. The unit was intended to work collectively with Jane Skeates as co-ordinator. However, according to Jane Skeates' interview, she appears to have taken on an increasingly managerial role as interpersonal difficulties in the unit worsened.

assistance could no longer be expected from central government. Across London, authorities slashed their budgets.

The crisis in Camden hit the work of the lesbian and gay committee in two ways. First, Sandra Plummer and other left wing councillors were removed by the chief whip from all committees as a disciplinary measure for voting against the leadership's budgetary reduction proposals.[128] This meant Plummer was no longer chair of the Lesbian and Gay Committee. She did not return to that position until May 1989. According to Plummer:

> "No strategy was developed during that period. The workers were very disoriented, but Barbara Hughes (the new chair) felt the workers would know what to do."[129]

The second major effect of the financial crisis was that it became very difficult for the lesbian and gay unit to persuade services to initiate new policies or practices. Departments, struggling to cope with budget and staff reductions, were not inclined to release resources or officer time for what they considered peripheral issues. The lesbian and gay unit were also affected by the cuts. They received instructions to introduce savings of twenty per cent. This they achieved by cutting their non-salaries budget to just under sixty per cent of what it had previously been. The alternative - making one officer redundant - was considered impossible given the size of their workload.

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[128] This meant voting against Labour group and party policy.

[129] Interview with Sandra Plummer.

By the end of 1987, Camden council's lesbian and gay unit and Committee had only just begun.

> "A lot of the work initiated by the end of 1987, went on to be implemented later, especially in social services such as adoption and fostering." (S. Plummer interview)

However the work was already encountering difficulties. Budgetary reductions, political strife, serious tensions within the unit, implementation difficulties and a rapid fall-off of interest within the lesbian and gay communities, all jeopardised the effectiveness of Camden's lesbian and gay policies.[130]

Moreover, in contrast to other authorities where a change in the political leadership had led to its distancing from the lesbian and gay committee, in Camden, the leadership tried to absorb the Committee by choosing a chair (after Plummer was removed) from amongst its own ranks. While this safeguarded the Committee's short-term future and that of the unit, in the long-run the strategy allowed both to become ineffectual and increasingly irrelevant to the borough's lesbian and gay communities. It was to take more than three years for the Committee and unit to find their feet again; but by then the environment of Labour authorities had fundamentally changed.

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[130] This was not only due to the controversy over co-option. As well, according to Jane Skeates' interview, once the unit and committee were established, municipal lesbian and gay initiatives were no longer considered radical and exciting.

E. SIMILARITIES, DIFFERENCES AND CYCLES.

One of my main objectives in writing this chapter has been to demonstrate the similarities between different authorities developing lesbian and gay work. However, before discussing this further, I first wish to consider some of the differences in approach between the councils studied and the impact of this on their degree of success.

Between 1982 and 1987, the development of lesbian and gay initiatives grew increasingly complex as new authorities commenced work on ever larger scales. In part this was due to the close networks of lesbian and gay activists which enabled the aspirations of one authority to become the reality for another. Indeed, council developments in one district set precedents for what was realistic and reasonable to demand elsewhere. By 1986, with an increasing number of authorities commencing work in this area, the process looked as though it would continue to expand indefinitely. Then came the severe financial crises that hit local authorities in the mid and late 1980s accompanied by the changing mood of national Labour Party politics as it moved towards a more pragmatic, electorally-oriented approach.

Haringey's lesbian and gay unit, established immediately before these financial and political changes took effect, was the largest in the country. By the time of Camden's unit and committee, despite proposals for even more complex structures and resourcing, the political sea change was already in effect. The leadership stalled and lesbian and gay activists felt compromised. Yet although Camden's lesbian and gay structure never fulfilled its expectations, the

organisational and policy proposals advanced demonstrated how far lesbian and gay initiatives had moved from the early work of authorities such as Islington in the early 1980s. For this reason I have described the process of establishing Camden's unit and committee in some depth. The use of a research project, the allocation of support staff to various areas (training, outreach, policy development), the emphasises on proper community representation, the initial reports on all areas of council provision and service with far reaching recommendations, all these demonstrate how far lesbian and gay work had moved in five years.

While Islington possessed a committee with no support staff, Nottingham established lesbian and gay sub-committees reporting to an Equal Opportunities Committee with two officers job-sharing a lesbian and gay post within an equal opportunities unit. In Camden, a full lesbian and gay committee was serviced by its own specialist unit. Yet one might argue that these distinctions in committee status were of symbolic rather than practical value - Islington as a lesbian and gay committee was barely more successful than as a working party.[131] However, most people interviewed emphasised the importance of having paid support staff and resources.

Substantial resources, controlled directly by a lesbian and gay committee, barely existed in any of the authorities discussed. Where committees did possess small budgets, however, it enabled them to develop work without being entirely dependent on the good will of other

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[131] The status of the committee might be important if as a working party or sub-committee it was being over-ridden by the body it reported to.

services. The ability to fund community projects, for example, increased a committee's relevance within the voluntary sector. Yet, it is also arguable that having an independent budget could backfire, encouraging the committee and support staff to focus on small initiatives that could be organised independently rather than struggling with departments for changes in service provision.

Paid support staff were important for the reasons discussed in relation to Islington council, but I would suggest stronger determinants of success existed than the size of the specialist officer core. One such factor was the siting of support. To what extent were councillors, the leadership, community activists and other council officers not only passively acquiescent, but actually prepared to initiate and help develop lesbian and gay policies?[132] In terms of councillor support, several considerations seem to have been relevant: how many openly lesbian and gay councillors existed? How experienced were they? What kind of seniority did they possess? Were they allied with or against the leadership? And what was their relationship with lesbian and gay activists and committee support officers? The relationship between lesbian and gay committees and their council leadership also proved crucial. In neither Nottingham nor Islington was this particularly good. In other authorities, not discussed here, such as Manchester City Council, leadership support was an important factor in the early development of lesbian and gay policy work.

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[132] See Southampton Advisory Committee on Lesbian and Gay Citizens, Minutes, item 2(d), talk by Greenwich Management Training Officer - for lesbian and gay EOPs to be effective they must gain the support of all relevant groups: councillors, officers, trade union and lesbian and gay community.

One illustration of this was the case of a young man with AIDS who was compulsorily detained in hospital.[133] Graham Stringer, leader of Manchester council, became involved in ensuring the man's release, and then, as part of a commitment to Manchester's gay community, helped push through a developed AIDS policy. This was identified by many interviewees in Manchester as one of the few achievements of the lesbian and gay committee during the period studied.[134]

The support and interest of community activists was also key in maintaining the relevance of municipal lesbian and gay work for its constituents. The experience of Camden, where lesbian and gay activists did not participate in the early work of the committee, can be compared to authorities such as Nottingham. There, co-optees played a high profile role. Yet, lacking support from senior management and the council leadership, suggestions and initiatives raised by Nottingham's committees were continuously blocked, hindered or ignored.

Nottingham's experience also highlights the importance of involving sympathetic officers across the council in the development of lesbian and gay work. Yet, this relies on such officers being already in place, a situation more prevalent in some of the authorities studied than others. In Camden, cross-departmental officer structures were developed to ensure the lesbian and gay unit did not take on the full brunt of such work. People feared that otherwise gay initiatives would be

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[133] See Manchester Gay Men's Sub-Committee, 16 September 1985; ibid, 24 September 1985; ibid, 27 July 1987 (re: work review 1986-7). See also interviews with Paul Hinshaw, Manchester equal opportunities officer (gay men's issues) and Terry Waller, co-optee, Manchester Gay Men's Sub-Committee, March 1990.

[134] Ibid.

marginalised, and unit workers burnt out from the impossibility of their task. Similar strategies were adopted in Manchester and Haringey, where departmentally located lesbian and gay officers were prepared to work both within and across services to develop gay policies.[135] Although cross-departmental officer groups were not particularly successful in any of the authorities studied, I would argue this failing contributed to the limitations of the initiatives described.

Yet despite the superficial differences in structure and emphasis between the authorities, what is more remarkable are the similarities in experience and approach. One common factor I encountered was the existence of a single key figure: Bob Crossman in Islington, Richard McCance in Nottingham and Sandra Plummer in Camden. In each case, the actor was a Labour Party councillor, committed to developing lesbian and gay policies, and with the power and knowledge to do so. Yet to what extent can one say that lesbian and gay municipal policies depended on the work of a few individuals?

In chapter two I set out the structural factors and historical changes which enabled lesbian and gay politics to reach the municipal agenda. Clearly, within this context, individual actors played a part in exerting pressure and initiating particular organisational processes, for example, setting up meetings or steering motions through the requisite forums. However, little would have happened without the interest and commitment of lesbian and gay officers, community activists and Labour Party members more generally. Moreover, I would

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[135] See interviews with Chris Root and Paul Fairweather in Manchester, and personal knowledge.

suggest that lesbian and gay initiatives developed most successfully in those authorities where the impetus and initiative did not come from one sole figure, such as in Haringey and Manchester where policies had a broader base of support.

Other similarities in the development of lesbian and gay municipal work can be seen in the use of committees and miniature departments to deliver anti-discriminatory policies; the emphasis and location of lesbian and gay policies within an equal opportunities discourse; the tensions and in some cases separation of lesbians from gay men; the stress on outreach, community participation, anti-heterosexism training, campaigning and symbolic initiatives; and the support shown by nearly every lesbian and gay committee and support staff for a local centre. Moreover, the work on service provision and employment within authorities picked up many similar issues: housing succession, harassment, adoption and fostering, special arts events, improved library resources and EOP slogans on recruitment advertisements.

Finally, perhaps the most striking similarity within municipal lesbian and gay work was the cycle of development, repeated in all the authorities studied. Such a cycle seems to have had four stages. First, initial enthusiasm amongst lesbian and gay activists in the Labour Party, NALGO and elsewhere, with support from left-wing councillors was followed by the establishment of a committee and, in some cases, the introduction of officer support. Second, a peak in work output and departmental responsiveness was reached as specialist officers, new councillors and community co-optees became more experienced and confident. Third, this was followed by growing disillusionment and a

decline in interest amongst community representatives as few concrete results were evident despite a plethora of formal policies. At the same time, specialist officers began to `burn-out`, caught between community demands and council pressures,[136] exacerbated by a reduction in the support offered by sympathetic (heterosexual) councillors who had found a new cause or given them up altogether. Meanwhile, the combined effects of local residents' hostility, media outrage and electoral anxieties caused the leadership to pull back. They then tried to reduce the profile of lesbian and gay work by censoring agenda papers, threatening or making substantial resource reductions or by reducing the power and authority of the specialist officers and committee. Finally, only a small core of activity remained, carried out by officers with little external support and direction.

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[136] See, in particular, for discussion of this problem Manchester Gay Men's Sub-Committee, Workers' Report, 25 November 1985; ibid, 5 June 1986; Lesbian Sub-Committee, 6 August 1987.

CHAPTER FOUR.

THE LIMITS OF LIBERAL BUREAUCRACY:

IDENTIFYING THE IDEOLOGICAL STEER.

A. INTRODUCTION.

In the previous chapter, I examined the rise and fall of municipal lesbian and gay work within three authorities between 1979 and 1987. Here I explore a different trajectory. What happened to lesbian and gay initiatives as they travelled through the policy-implementation process?[1] To what extent was work watered down, undermined and screened out, and how did this happen? Was it due to the actions of particular elite actors? Was it the impact of structural factors? Or was it a combination of both? In order to address these questions, I have divided the policy-implementation process into four phases: the initial articulation of ideas for possible projects; developing draft policies or initiatives; formal decision making within committee and, finally, implementation. In discussing each stage, I consider the relative influence of the actors involved; operational constraints; shifting discourses and objectives; and the ideological implications for lesbian and gay municipal work.

Before embarking on this project, several caveats need to be mentioned. First, because I am looking generally at the policy-implementation process, the differences between authorities and between

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[1] See R. Jennings (1977:37-40); the earlier stages of the policy-implementation process as identified by Jennings: expression of dissatisfaction by a section of the community and reformulation of political opinion on the matter are discussed in chapter two.

different initiatives are treated as ancillary. Second, I present an explicitly simplified, linear model of policy making and implementation. In subsequent chapters I go on to problematise this model. However, I feel it is useful here in revealing the ideological implications of different aspects of the process. Third, in examining the sexual politics underlying initiatives, I play down the importance of differential readings and focus instead on the play of signification within the `text`; a term I use broadly to encompass the organisational and political conjuncture within which lesbian and gay work was developed (see chapter one).

B. COMPETING PARADIGMS OF SEXUAL POLITICS.

1. Municipal actors and sexual strategies.

Lansley et al. (1989:ch. 9) distinguish between two approaches to municipal lesbian and gay work. The first, defined as civil rights oriented, focused on the need to eradicate discrimination and prejudice: homosexual people's right not to have their homosexuality used or counted against them.[2] In the interviews I carried out, several people characterised this, somewhat dismissively, as the dominant approach amongst heterosexual Labour councillors.[3]

> "Let's do something nice for the poor people...Give them something to shut them up. But not too much." (B. Crossman interview)

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[2] See for an example of this approach Lambeth Working Party for Gay Men and Lesbians, Agenda, item 7(g), 21 May 1985. Report of the director of construction services.

[3] See interviews with Jan Parker and Bob Crossman.

Civil rights objectives included the eradication of formal discrimination in employment policies and condemnation of anti-gay harassment. Amongst such advocates of what I shall define as weak liberal-pluralism, opinions varied as to whether anti-discriminatory measures should include policies which might constitute acceptance or validation of lesbian and gay lifestyles, for example, enabling lesbians and gay men to adopt, or incorporating discussion of gay sexuality within sex education lessons. Thus, although an equal opportunities discourse was deployed within this paradigm, its meaning remained uncertain.[4] More prevalent, as Crossman suggests, was a depiction of lesbians and gays as victims (see chapter five), unable to control or determine their sexual orientation.[5] Homosexuality was depicted as a fixed and permanent characteristic, homosexuals, a discrete section of the community defined by their sexuality.[6] Thus the socio-biological indigenity of homosexuality was emphasised, epitomised by the notion that the level of incidence was fixed universally at ten per cent.[7]

The second approach, described by Lansley et al. (1989:ch. 9) as `countering heterosexism`, was principally articulated by lesbian and

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[4] See chapter two for further discussion of tensions surrounding the application of EOPs.

[5] This was a view expressed, for example, by Bernie Grant, in his interview.

[6] See description of Manchester Labour group as liberal by Paul Fairweather in his interview.

[7] See for example, Planning Committee, Report, city planning officer, Manchester council, 28 February 1985. In the report it is stated that Kinsey's studies of the 1940s and 1950s which put the incidence of homosexuality at ten per cent were applicable for Britain in the 1980s.

gay officers, councillors and community representatives, as well as by a few left-wing, heterosexual councillors and officers. However, between heterosexuals and homosexuals adopting this approach perspectives generally differed. Whilst the former tended to advance a strong liberal-pluralism, lesbians and gays were more likely to articulate a sexual politics I shall define as radical-pluralism.

Strong liberal-pluralism recognised the institutionalised nature of the problems lesbians and gay men faced, thus the deployment of the term heterosexism.

> `Heterosexism is the belief and practice that heterosexuality is the only natural form of sexuality...(It) also teaches people to regard lesbians and gay men as `queer`, as `perverted`...because of the way these attitudes have been institutionalised, lesbians and gay men are subject both to serious discrimination...and harassment...`[8]

Despite the fact that the obstacles were still identified as bigotry and discrimination,[9] this approach went beyond that of weak liberal pluralists, who focused on direct forms of discriminatory practices, by arguing instead for training and education.[10] People needed to `unlearn` their homophobia. It was not just a matter of how people behaved but what was going on in their heads as well. Like their civil rights oriented colleagues, strong liberal pluralists tended to also treat lesbians and gays as a discrete community. Whilst the former group perceived sexuality as a matter of sexual practices, the latter focused on identity. Neither, though, treated heterosexuality as a political

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[8] Haringey Labour Party, Manifesto, section 5, 1986. Emphasis added.

[9] See interview with John Nicholson.

[10] Ibid.

structure nor perceived its norms, practices and strictures as having any bearing on the homosexual experience.[11]

Where strong liberal-pluralism primarily differed from its weaker counterpart was in the value judgment attached to homosexuality, that is in the former's affirmation of homosexuality's normative equivalence to heterosexuality. Deploying a multi-cultural framework, it was argued that homosexual lifestyles were as positive and rewarding as heterosexual ones (S. Lansley et al., 1989:172). Lesbians and gays needed to be assisted to appreciate the validity of their sexual orientation with policies such as `positive images`.[12] Positive action and targeted provision were vital to improve the quality of life for lesbians and gays.[13] Indirect discrimination was also to be challenged.

Although some lesbians and gay men adopted this position, others articulated a more radical sexual politics, using the language of oppression and liberation as well as of rights.

> "We went in looking for high profile change...They (councillors) saw discrimination, individuals suffering; we saw oppression." (F. Otitojou interview)

Whilst a radical-pluralist paradigm accepted those tenets of multi-culturalism that refused to make value judgments between different

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[11] See for example Lambeth Working Party on Gay Men and Lesbians, Minutes, item 6, 21 May 1984. Report of the director of administrative and legal services. `...This large minority group is still the target of considerable prejudice and misunderstanding and little consideration has been given to the needs of Lambeth's gay community.`

[12] In Lambeth films showing lesbians and gays in a positive light were requested; Lambeth Working Party for Gay Men and Lesbians, Minutes, item 13, 2 July 1984. In Manchester, the Gay Men's Sub-Committee agreed (15 December 1986) that sex education should promote positive images of gay sexuality.

[13] See, for example, interview with Rachel Webb.

lifestyles, at the same time it began to problematise the relationship between heterosexuality and homosexuality. Camden lesbian councillor, Sandra Plummer, for example, argued that homosexuality touches the sexual dilemma for heterosexuals in an uncomfortable way.[14]

Generally more focused on the institutionalised nature of their oppression, lesbians and gays perceived the problem as extending beyond ignorance and bigotry, to the way social institutions such as the family were organised. Yet, despite radical-pluralism's inclusion of social constructionism to explain the dominant sexual orientation,[15] the notion of sexuality as fluid and changeable remained implicit rather than explicit. Instead lesbian and gay municipal actors emphasised the existence of their communities, focusing on the need for participation and empowerment. Initiatives were desired that would affirm the equal validity of their culture and lifestyle (see chapter three), as well as many of the measures already described.[16]

The final approach I wish to discuss briefly is that of lesbian feminism. Whilst it differed from many of the tenets of early radical feminism discussed in chapter two, it was nevertheless an approach that perceived lesbianism as extending beyond matters of personal sexual preference. For many lesbian feminist municipal actors, their sexuality entailed a pre-figurative lifestyle; not equal to heterosexuality, but preferred; chosen because deemed less institutionally oppressive.

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[14] Interview with Sandra Plummer.

[15] Ibid.

[16] See interviews with Jane Skeates, Paul Hinshaw, Chris Root and Jo Fraser.

Within this lesbian feminist paradigm, councillors, officers and community representatives tended to approach local government in one of two ways.

The first argued that working in local government around lesbian issues necessitated building links with gay men.

> "Before I joined the (Haringey) lesbian and gay unit, I worked in LAGER (Lesbian and Gay Employment Rights) and became more open to working with gay men. As a feminist I rethought things about gay men... Some were taking on issues of sexism. To work within the system meant making compromises." (S. Levy interview)

Such gender alliances focused on matters of common concern: institutionalised discrimination, community development and the need for positive images (although notions of what this latter entailed undoubtedly differed).[17] At the same time it was deemed vital to incorporate those aspects of lesbian feminist politics potentially compatible with local government practice, for example, the recognition of `multiple oppression`[18] and the right of oppressed groups to speak on their own behalf.

The second strategy, adopted in the main by community activists rather than by specialist lesbian and gay officers, entailed, in contrast, lesbians distancing themselves from gay men and gay-identified issues. The aim instead was to develop initiatives which would link lesbian municipal actors directly with grass-roots lesbian politics - through, for example, funding for groups and campaigns, and solidarity gestures. This approach was particularly evident in the case

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[17] See interviews with Paul Hinshaw and Chris Root.

[18] The concept of `multiple oppression`, with its conceptualisation of `compound` power as a process of addition or multiplication was deployed frequently in equal opportunities work.

of co-optees in Manchester and Nottingham and to a lesser extent amongst lesbian feminist community activists in Camden.

2. Prevailing ideas and policy development.

Given the diversity of sexual politics amongst actors involved in lesbian and gay municipal politics, which perspectives, if any, dominated at the initial stage of advancing broad proposals? Where lesbian and gay committees existed or officers were in post, I would argue, the civil rights paradigm of some officers and councillors did not at this stage prevail. This was largely because in such circumstances those actors did not take the policy initiative.

Similarly, although community representatives fed ideas through to councillors, and specialist lesbian and gay officers, and even in some cases wrote and presented their own reports, they lacked the organisational positioning to begin substantial work on new policies or projects. As well, their politics sat less comfortably with dominant local government ways of working. In contrast, lesbian and gay specialist officers tended to be more effective because they had more extensively absorbed municipal values.

This was not always the case. For many, straight out of grass-roots lesbian and gay politics, their initial proposals met with fierce resistance as councillors and other officers refused to negotiate with an `alien` set of ideas.[19] However, over a period, usually of months, specialist lesbian and gay officers absorbed or learned municipal

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[19] See generally on this point J. Gyford et al. (1989:155).

discourse and organisational procedures.[20] Not all did, however. For this latter group, Jan Parker argues, their continuing community politics approach rendered them less effective than others who adopted municipal values or who learned to compromise.[21]

Thus, because specialist officers' ideas fitted the system better than those of community activists and co-optees, because they could be more easily accommodated, they tended to be given greater consideration by senior officers and by councillors. Nevertheless, there were other reasons why the ideas developed were principally those of specialist officers or where not in post, such as in Islington and Lambeth, then of lesbian and gay councillors and departmental officers. These included organisational knowledge, job remit, access to decision-making, location within the local communication system (K. Newton, 1976:162), current engagement in ongoing work, network membership (both within and outside the council),[22] knowledge of lesbian and gay issues,[23] specialist knowledge of particular areas of council provision, confidence and status (relative to co-optees).[24]

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[20] See generally G. Salaman (1980:ch. 11); J. Stewart (1983:ch. 6).

[21] Interview with Jan Parker. For advantages and disadvantages of this approach see interview with Soreh Levy; see, for comparable points on gender, S. Button (1984:47).

[22] According to Jan Parker's interview, lesbian and gay councillors did not network to the same extent and were consequently much more isolated.

[23] Interviews with Sandra Plummer and Chris Root.

[24] Whilst specialist lesbian and gay officers often felt disrespected, seen to be appointed because of their sexuality rather than their skills and expertise, their appointment also had the effect of professionalising and distancing lesbian and gay work from community activists. See also interview with Jane Skeates.

C. STEERING POLICIES THROUGH BUREAUCRATIC TURBULENCE.

Out of the initial discussions of ideas and proposals, some were subsequently chosen to be developed into actual policies or initiatives. How did this process unfold prior to committee? What means were used to determine which proposals should be developed further? And what effect did this process have on the sexual ideologies conveyed? At the stage of articulation, discussed above, the dominant ideological response was a combination of challenging institutionalised discrimination, opposing prejudice and a communitarian ideology of empowerment, non-exclusion, accountability and participation. To what extent did these ideological tenets remain through the second stage of the policy process? Or were they organised out and the initiatives developed grounded instead in other norms and social meanings?

1. Censorship, scrutiny and organised consent.

In deciding which of a number of different proposals to progress, lesbian and gay specialist officers considered the following factors: what was achievable; the issue's importance or priority;[25] its political appropriateness, whether it would be likely to be blocked for electoral or public relations reasons;[26] and the existence and impact of financial constraints.

If the decision was made to go ahead, consultation would then take place with a range of other actors. Where equal opportunity or lesbian

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[25] Interview with Jane Skeates.

[26] Interviews with Harry Joshua and Jo Fraser.

and gay working parties existed these would often provide an initial means of consulting with departmental officers. Emmy Doye describes the situation in Camden:

> "There were monthly meetings of the lesbian and gay workers groups with LAGU (lesbian and gay unit). Extensive consultation would take place with them. They were also used as a forum where employees could make suggestions."[27]

Certain issues, principally concerning personnel, were matters on which local authority trade unions expected to be consulted. The response of trade union representatives to lesbian and gay issues varied between workplace and between unions. Generally, NALGO, the white collar officer's union, had a good reputation, with anti-discriminatory policies, and lesbian and gay groups.[28] However, the existence of such groups did not guarantee constructive relations between the union, and lesbian and gay committees and councillors.[29] In some cases the hostility of union branches made progress very difficult.[30] In Haringey, attempts to issue a questionnaire to all staff, to elicit lesbian and gay employees' experiences, were delayed by the personnel department and by the Joint Trade Union Committee.[31]

> "Unions were quite sticky about the questionnaire and it ran for months and months. I don't know whether it was the unions objecting as much as was represented by management. We didn't liaise directly with the unions. There was little direct contact." (F. Otitojou interview)

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[27] Interview with Emmy Doye.

[28] Interview with Jan Parker.

[29] In interviews with both Bob Crossman and Esther Leeves, problems with NALGO lesbian and gay representatives were mentioned.

[30] Interview with Jo Fraser.

[31] Personal knowledge.

On occasions, consultation took place with lesbian and gay activists, usually where proposals concerned outreach, community development, or funding of a particular group or project. In some authorities, such as Nottingham, where informal meetings of community representatives and officers were held, other issues could be discussed at an early stage (see chapter three). Public meetings were also organised on particular issues, for example, education. Although attendance was unpredictable, when successful, such meetings provided an opportunity for specialist officers to test proposals and get a sense of activists' concerns. According to Femi Otitojou, in Haringey:

> "Co-optees were very involved in developing the unit's work plan... We had a lot of meetings to test the political response because many lesbian and gay activists were active in the Labour Party and so would check things out at ward meetings. They would report back and that shaped what we put forward.[32]

However, as Femi Otitojou states, the role played by community activists changed during the lifetime of Haringey's unit.

> "At the beginning they felt they owned the unit. But as we became more confident, more local authority officers, they felt less in control."[33]

With the consultation and development process on a proposal under way, a decision would have to be made whether to take it to committee (J. Gyford et al., 1989:139-40). This would require further discussions with relevant councillors and managers and a draft report to be drawn up. Again, a number of considerations came into play: did the work have resource implications; did it involve changes to policy and therefore need to be referred to the relevant service committee, perhaps by a recommendation from the lesbian and gay committee (a useful strategy if

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[32] Interview with Femi Otitojou.

[33] Ibid.

the departmental committee was showing reluctance to discuss the matter); would it interest committee members, was it a controversial matter where the officers needed the protection provided by committee backing; or just a piece of work whose progress would be facilitated by having the committee's support?

Alternatively, were there reasons why the proposal should not be taken? Harry Joshua and Jo Fraser describe how many controversial initiatives were in fact developed outside formal committees, particularly in the run-up to an election.[34] Jane Skeates reports that in Camden, as a result of local media interest in the council's heterosexism awareness training, a concerted effort was made to keep the issue out of public forums.[35]

Whilst some actors in the pre-committee process principally played a consultative role, others acted to contain and control work being developed. In Islington, where there were no lesbian and gay officers, and agenda decisions were taken by councillors, responsibility for monitoring took place through political channels and ultimately with the leader. In Manchester and Nottingham equal opportunity units, almost all draft reports were seen prior to the agenda being drawn up by the co-ordinator. Yet, despite the similarities in the two authorities' structures for developing lesbian and gay work, perceptions as to the degree of control exerted through such scrutiny differed significantly. Harry Joshua, co-ordinator of Nottingham equal opportunities unit, was described as playing a predominantly supportive

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[34] Interviews with Harry Joshua and Jo Fraser.

[35] Interview with Jane Skeates.

role, making comments on draft reports, asking for changes where necessary, and negotiating a consensus.[36] In Manchester, on the other hand, the co-ordinator's style and role was described by officers as authoritarian and coercive.[37]

In units without internal co-ordination or management, such as the collective structures adopted in Haringey and Camden, managerial decisions regarding whether to develop or halt work tended to be taken at a higher level.[38] In Camden, this was the chief executive,[39] in Haringey, first and second tier officers in the community affairs service. However, even in councils where specialist lesbian and gay officers were managed by co-ordinators, many leaderships had become so sensitised to the public relations implications of such work that senior management were deployed to monitor closely all lesbian and gay committee agendas. In Manchester, every report concerning lesbian and gay issues had to be submitted to the chief executive.[40] In Nottingham, Betty Higgins, the council leader, took on this role, asking for copies of all reports prior to the dispatch of the Gay Men's Sub-Committee's agendas.[41]

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[36] See interviews with Harry Joshua and Jo Fraser.

[37] Interviews with Paul Hinshaw and Chris Root. See also J. Gyford et al. (1989:104) on the increasing visibility of tensions and struggles between junior and senior staff as new officers challenged existing `conventional wisdoms`.

[38] See generally G. Stoker (1988:ch. 4).

[39] Interview with Jane Skeates. See also, for more general discussion on this point, S. Button (1984:45); J. Gyford et al. (1989:110-14).

[40] Interview with Paul Fairweather.

[41] See letter from city secretary to committee secretary of the Gay Men's Sub-Committee, 25 July 1986.

In the case of council members, their involvement in deciding which issues could and should be taken forward took place at different points during the pre-committee stage.[42] Generally, it occurred before final reports were drafted, since it was easier then to suggest certain items were inappropriate for committee or should be abandoned than to do so after a significant amount of discussion and writing had taken place. Although some of this contact was initiated by councillors, much of it also came from officers anxious not to develop initiatives which would not have member backing.

> "Lesbian and gay issues were referred to the leadership and from there to the (Labour) group, if officers were concerned." (H. Joshua interview)

Yet, in a constantly changing political environment, not all problematic issues could be identified and resolved in advance. Often they were not picked up until the chair's meeting with officers just prior to committee (J. Gyford et al., 1989:140-1, 143-4). These meetings were used by chairs "to weed out sensitive issues".[43] "The chair looked for pitfalls and political embarrassment."[44] Decisions taken at these pre-meetings did not tend to result in reports being deleted, although this could happen. Rather, they were used to discuss the approach chair and officers would take in relation to specific items and to draw out points that would be pertinent or useful to make

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[42] See generally J. Gyford et al. (1989:139). In some cases, such as in Haringey and Camden, left-wing councillors intervened to encourage lesbian and gay officers to act in ways contrary to the wishes of the leadership or Labour group; personal knowledge.

[43] Interview with Jo Fraser.

[44] Ibid.

at committee. Often this was as much about officers briefing the chair as about the chair controlling officer output.

In the case of co-optee chairs, pre-committee meetings performed a different function since as community representatives they tended to be less concerned about avoiding political embarrassment for the council. Such chairs used pre-meetings to feed their own concerns or specific interests into the agenda-setting process. Yet according to Paul Fairweather, Manchester gay men's officer, "although they had an impact, it was not automatically their way."[45] For, despite the expectation that committee chairs would take the final decision on the content of their agendas unless overridden by the leader, this was not so in the case of community representative chairs who found it much harder to resist the advice or demands of senior management and councillors.

> "The (co-optee) chairs were not very directive. Officers controlled the agenda. Chairs were told to change the agenda by officers and management. The chairs were weak and agreed." (P. Fairweather interview)

At this agenda setting stage, other officers too had an impact. Delays or objections by the director of finance or legal services could mean a report would not be ready for committee. Even with the agenda complete, the committee secretariat could, and occasionally did, block reports at the last moment on grounds of procedural irregularity, confidentiality, or because the report was seen to be making

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[45] Interview with Paul Fairweather.

unprofessional allegations concerning the practices of departments or senior officers.[46]

2. Accommodation and resistance.

What then were the ideological implications of this process? This question needs to be addressed in two parts. First, how did specialist lesbian and gay officers respond to the process described above? Second, what were the effects of interventions by other officers and members?

From the interviews carried out, it appears that lesbian and gay officers responded to the structures within which they worked in both a proactive and reactive manner. The former is explicitly described by Jane Skeates:

> "It was schizophrenic because we were tailoring everything to meet members' ideas of what the `problem` was... We rarely talked about choice...we rarely talked to heterosexual members about the benefits to heterosexual members - freedom of choice around sexuality and stuff...we were really into statistics. We didn't like that one in ten stuff (ten per cent of the population deemed gay), but we knew what would get you places. (It was) manipulative, but we were into that kind of stuff. I don't know otherwise how far we'd have got...We fed it to them in the right way..."[47]

Femi Otitojou from Haringey lesbian and gay unit makes a similar point:

> "Many of the members were not very conversant with the issues so couldn't defend them from stroppy officers. Even those who were with us, were not very articulate in supporting the steps agreed, so we watered down reports before they got to members and put things in the simplest of terms."[48]

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[46] Interviews with Jo Fraser and Femi Otitojou.

[47] Interview with Jane Skeates.

[48] Interview with Femi Otitojou.

Thus, it would seem more progressive approaches to sexual politics were consciously organised out at this stage by some specialist lesbian and gay officers in order to have the best possible chance of achieving limited goals. And yet notions of `freedom of choice`, without an analysis of heterosexuality and gender, remained within liberal-pluralist discourse. Hence, we can see how moderately progressive ideologies discussed amongst lesbian and gay officers (that is those which in a limited manner made it through the first stage), were already by this second stage being organised out. This occurred not so much because of explicit structural constraints as the fact such ideologies were deemed to conflict with or threaten the attitudes towards homosexuality of dominant municipal actors.[49]

This conscious manipulation of discourses to achieve desired results contrasts with the practices of many lesbian and gay officers, who, rather than exploiting ideologies that might win support, played down issues that would generate problems. Whilst such an approach targeted issues rather than their underlying ideology, the discontinuance or modification of work on certain topics clearly had ideological implications. Frequently, they involved children. In Lambeth, matters blew up over the possibility of children's homes stocking lesbian and gay books.[50] In Manchester, lesbian and gay work in social services was

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[49] A similar strategy to Camden was adopted by lesbian and gay officers in Ealing Borough Council. According to lesbian and gay officer, Lorraine Trenchard:

> "We chose languages and structures to ameliorate the fears of members."

[50] Interview with Esther Leeves.

kept out of the limelight for similar reasons.[51] In Haringey, proposals for an educational policy of positive images of lesbians and gays precipitated a tremendous backlash, a development I discuss in the following chapter. Although officer and member anxieties focused on negative media coverage rather than on the possible dissonance between their own sexual politics and that implicit within the policies, the effect was to organise out initiatives which could be seen as presenting young people with a sexual choice or which taught children that homosexuality and heterosexuality were equally valid.

The second mechanism of ideological organisation at the pre-committee stage was that of prolonged consultation. Whilst it sometimes led to initiatives possessing a more open textured ideological form as draft proposals tried to encompass and respond to the many different concerns raised, more often it weakened proposals. Sometimes ambiguous policies were agreed, thereby postponing the problem to the stage of implementation.[52] Alternatively, when disagreements arose with the trade unions or senior management, it sometimes seemed easier to remove the offending sentence or draft recommendation than to spend vast amounts of time and energy winning agreement for it.

The third and most explicit way in which progressive ideologies were organised out emerged from the filtering of reports and the proscribing of particular initiatives. Thus, initiatives would frequently became more inconsequential as specific proposals were deleted by senior officers or councillors, or alternatively proposals narrowed down.

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[51] See interviews with Paul Fairweather and Paul Hinshaw.

[52] See generally on this point K. Young (1990:33).

According to one interviewee, the co-ordinator of Manchester equal opportunities unit would frequently change reports.

> "Officers would demand more and she would reduce them. She watered down reports."(C. Root interview)

In London boroughs, this process was performed most powerfully through resource constraints. Lesbian and gay officers either knew or would be told that there was no point including a certain set of recommendations in a report or developing a particular initiative because the funds simply were not available.[53] For Camden lesbian and gay unit, commencing work in the midst of a major budget reduction process, this was a serious and constant problem.[54] To focus on what was possible, meant focusing on minor, incremental changes, since even work which did not directly involve resources, required the input of a certain level of 'officer-hours'.

Yet, despite the ideological impact of resource constraints and management pressures, few lesbian and gay officers gave in without a struggle. Although the values and procedures of bureaucratic process were absorbed so that explicit conflict was not always apparent, at the same time, as the accounts in chapter three revealed, municipal lesbian and gay work involved ongoing and severe intra-organisational conflict.

Specialist officers resisted attempts by others to marginalise, water-down and trivialise their work. To varying degrees they

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[53] Interview with Femi Otitojou..

[54] See interview with Jane Skeates.

succeeded, at least at the initial stage of making demands. Femi Otitojou describes the situation in Haringey:

> "The leadership tried to have a containing role...but because our politics were beyond a lot of them, they couldn't take us on effectively. One time Bernie Grant (the leader) demanded to see the unit in his office. We said we couldn't come because his office wasn't accessible. So he had to come down to the unit, onto our territory where there was eight of us and one of him."[55]

The key difficulty, however, for lesbian and gay officers was in maintaining control over initiatives as they passed to the formal committee stage and then on to implementation. Nevertheless, at this earlier point in the process, Haringey proved one of the most successful units to resist management pressure, thanks to its size and collective structure.

> "As a unit we got on well, partly as a result of the pressure. We united around our stance over -isms. We were more radical and confrontational and learned a lot from each other...We acted more like the voluntary sector... There were some good things about being outsiders. It was easier to be critical... Because we were a collective, they couldn't single people out for heads to roll." (S. Levy interview)[56]

The ideological tensions that emanated from being a pressure group within a bureaucratic state apparatus were evident in the reports drafted by specialist lesbian and gay officers for committee. There, discrepancies existed between, on the one hand, the substantive nature of the proposals and, on the other, the EOPs discourses deployed within the text. Pressures both explicit and implicit were placed on specialist officers to utilise this conceptual framework of equal opportunities. It gave their work legitimacy, made initiatives more

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[55] Interview with Femi Otitojou.

[56] See also interview with Femi Otitojou.

easily understood, facilitated acceptance of the issues by other officers and members, and provided a paradigm of what was discursively acceptable. Thus, reports emphasised the problems of institutional discrimination, prejudice, and community need.

While this was already a shift away from prior notions of equally valid sexualities, the actual proposed recommendations tended to be even more ideologically limited. Usually they involved one of three things: requests for future reports, consultation, and the establishment of working parties.[57] According to Femi Otitojou the ideological discrepancies within reports between discourse and proposals reflected the divergence between addressing the causes of the oppression and simply trying to limit its effects.

> "The report addressed the infection, the recommendations just the symptoms." (F. Otitojou interview)

Why did such a disjunction exist? I have referred already to some of the reasons for an equal opportunities discourse, but that provides only a partial explanation. A key factor was the tension between structural constraints and senior management's demands, and the desire to appease lesbian and gay community representatives, to demonstrate and reassure that their concerns were understood and receiving a response.[58] Femi Otitojou suggests that whilst the text of the report could afford to set out the causes of the oppression, the

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[57] Sometimes recommendations were phrased in a particular way to hide the true purpose of the proposal. For example, in Ealing, a relations and sexuality advisor post was called a health education officer in order to be acceptable to members; see interview with Lorraine Trenchard.

[58] See for further discussion chapter seven.

recommendations needed to be concrete, concerned with immediate problems, and emphasising practices rather than attitudes. The text and recommendations, she argues, served different functions. This bifurcation was significant, as I suggest in the next section, in explaining the diverse and sometimes separate meanings communicated to committee members, the general public, and to implementing officers through the development of lesbian and gay policies.

D. POWER AND AUTHORITY AT COMMITTEE.

Traditional organisational theory has tended to focus on committees as the main locus of decision-making; that is if ideologies were organised anywhere this is where it would happen.[59] By examining the development of lesbian and gay initiatives I have demonstrated the extent to which such an analysis oversimplifies actual practice. By the time an initiative is placed on a committee agenda and then discussed there, it has been filtered and reshaped through a complex process of self-censorship, consultation and monitoring.

In this section, I examine the ideological impact on lesbian and gay work of the formal committee process. I start by considering the relative power and influence of different actors and the roles they performed. I then go on to examine the actual decision-making power of lesbian and gay committees. Finally, I examine the effects of all these factors on the organisation of ideology.

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[59] See, for pluralist perspectives on local government, A. Cox et al. (1985:194-199)..

1. Actors, roles and influence.

On many lesbian and gay committees, community representatives formed the principal group of actors committed to the development of lesbian and gay work. Co-optees broadened the representative nature of municipal decision-making bodies,[60] enabling a wider range of views to be heard. More knowledgable about lesbian and gay issues than most councillors,[61] they provided a `sounding board` for new proposals.

The opportunity for community representatives to make their views and opinions known occurred in a variety of different ways: through informal meetings with officers and councillors outside of committee;[62] at pre-meetings, where officers and chair went through the agenda to brief majority group members, to which co-optees were sometimes invited; and at the committee itself, where they could (i) put items on the agenda in advance;[63] (ii) raise matters under `Any Other Business`;[64] (iii) ask questions or comment on any of the reports discussed; and (iv) suggest, amend or oppose recommendations.

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[60] Interview with Emmy Doye, lesbian co-optee on Camden Women's Committee. Many of the points discussed in this section are applicable to co-optees in general, rather than just those sitting on lesbian and gay committees.

[61] Interview with Jo Fraser.

[62] In Haringey, community activists could feed recommendations through to the Lesbian and Gay Sub-Committee via the outreach workers' reports on community meetings; for example, see Lesbian and Gay Sub-Committee, Agenda, item 5, 21 October 1986.

[63] Interview with David Dawson.

[64] Ibid.

The reality of community participation was, however, very different from its ideal.[65] In my interviews, three problems (all interconnected) surfaced: lack of knowledge, lack of confidence and lack of power. Despite local authority attempts to involve community representatives in the policy making process, few instituted the necessary changes properly to facilitate this taking place; nor did many councils give adequate consideration to the consequences or implications of community participation.

At the most basic level, co-optees complained that agenda papers and reports were rarely received more than twenty-four hours prior to a committee meeting making it impossible for them to be adequately read and discussed in advance. In conjunction with suddenly rearranged or cancelled meetings, this made proper accountability to the lesbian and gay community impossible. According to Emmy Doye, "it was a matter of guesswork about what people thought."[66] Coming to meetings unprepared, without adequate information further lessened co-optees' confidence.[67] It also undermined their sense of legitimacy as community representatives since they could not speak meaningfully on their community's behalf.

A second factor contributing to co-optees' lack of knowledge and consequent lack of confidence was the paucity of training offered to

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[65] See for a similar point in relation to women's committees, S. Button (1984:54-6).

[66] Interview with Emmy Doye.

[67] In Haringey, there were regular pre-meetings between officers and co-optees. "It was not though an equal relationship. Officers directed co-optees more than the other way"; interview with Soreh Levy.

them by the council.[68] Induction and similar sessions were sometimes organised for co-optees, but these were rarely sufficient, and, particularly in the case of high co-optee turnover, rarely coincided with new committee membership. The content of training was also limited, since it frequently neglected or played down the importance of informal municipal processes - vital to progressing controversial policies, such as lesbian and gay initiatives.[69] Further, aside from information on the decision-making process, few co-optees possessed sufficient understanding of the workings of different departments to be able to translate broad demands for lesbian and gay equality into concrete proposals. As Emmy Doye said, when interviewed, "it was often hard to articulate issues".[70] According to Paul Hinshaw:

> "Lesbian and gay co-optees didn't have a clue what to ask for; they were so unaware of their own power and of how far they could push things."[71]

For many community representatives, contributing to formal, minuted discussions with councillors and senior officers present, with much of the emphasis on highly procedural matters, was an intimidating and inaccessible process. In Lambeth, co-optees complained about the jargon used.[72] Emmy Doye describes how off-putting it was being a co-optee on

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[68] Interviews with David Dawson and Emmy Doye.

[69] Interview with Terry Waller.

[70] Interview with Emmy Doye.

[71] Interview with Paul Hinshaw.

[72] Lambeth Working Party for Gay Men and Lesbians, Agenda, item 14, 7 January 1987.

Camden Women's Committee, meeting in the main committee room and having to speak through microphones.[73]

How much impact did community representatives then have on the decisions made? Those I interviewed all expressed doubts as to their efficacy. David Dawson and Emmy Doye describe how co-optees' views and suggestions might be minuted,[74] but were rarely acted upon if not backed by council members.[75] Despite their formal status, co-optees lacked the decision-making power of councillors. Their decisions could be overridden, ignored (without too many formal or informal repercussions) and put to the bottom of the pile. Harry Joshua argues this was because they lacked the lobbying power of other groups.

> "Lesbian and gay co-optees were relatively skilled at local authority procedures. They were more middle-class and educated (than other co-optees), but (other sub-committees were) more effective, because the lesbian and gay community had less political clout."[76]

The second group of members on lesbian and gay committees - councillors - encompassed a diverse range of opinions, ranging from the hostile and ambivalent through to the supportive and openly gay. `Out` councillors often took the chair, sometimes playing a facilitative role, other times being more directive, setting the terms of the discussion, and fending off hostile comments. Other sympathetic councillors might intervene with helpful procedural comments (Haringey's Lesbian and Gay Sub-Committee, for example, included the

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[73] Interview with Emmy Doye.

[74] Interviews with David Dawson and Emmy Doye.

[75] Ibid.

[76] Interview with Harry Joshua.

chairs of all major committees for this purpose), raise issues of particular personal importance, but otherwise tended to remain silent.[77]

> "They would mostly listen, unless they really didn't like it. Occasionally councillors on the Gay Men's Sub-Committee would argue against something they didn't want to get to the Equal Opportunities Committee because of lack of resources." (T. Waller interview)

In some authorities, Labour councillors played a less supportive role. In Nottingham, apart from openly gay councillor, Richard McCance, Labour committee members often intervened, according to Jo Fraser, "in a negative capacity of what was not possible."[78]

In the case of opposition councillors, their position was ambivalent. On the one hand, most were totally opposed to the very notion of a lesbian and gay committee; on the other, as committee members, there was an implicit expectation they would make helpful suggestions. Moreover, the process of being on such a committee over a period of years seems to have had a socialising or co-opting effect. On Haringey Lesbian and Gay Sub-Committee, one Conservative member, named as their spokesperson on gay and lesbian issues, and therefore expected to advance Conservative Party policy, became over the period of his committee membership increasingly helpful and unantagonistic.[79]

In contrast to community representatives who saw their accountability quite specifically to the lesbian and gay community or to a particular group within it, councillors tended to be more influenced by the views and demands of a wider, often conflicting

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[77] Interview with Terry Waller.

[78] Interview with Jo Fraser.

[79] Personal knowledge; see also interview with Ron Bell.

constituency. Consequently, their decisions were affected by comments in the local media, hostile residents and other pressure groups. This influence did not usually lead to the expression of negative opinions by Labour councillors at lesbian and gay committee meetings, but was a factor influencing suggestions for how work on particular issues should be progressed, and in decisions made away from the scrutiny or observance of lesbian and gay communities.

The other main group of actors attending lesbian and gay committees, aside from journalists and the general public, were council officers. Formally, the purpose of their presence was to present their reports, answer questions, and provide general advice when requested to do so. However, their exclusive access to a great deal of departmental information, combined with an air of authority and their deployment of professional discourse, gave such officers considerable influence over the decision-making process.[80]

2. Political lacunas and the locating of decisions.

For lesbian and gay committees in Manchester, Nottingham and Southampton, a major restriction on autonomy was their reporting lines through an equal opportunities committee.[81]

> "The sub-committee was theoretically the decision-making body, but because it needed the authorization of the Equal Opportunities Committee it was not really." (J. Fraser interview)

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[80] Interview with Emmy Doye; see also generally on officer influence K. Newton (1976:ch. 7)

[81] Interviews with Paul Fairweather and Paul Hinshaw.

A similar situation existed in Ealing where according to Lorraine Trenchard:

> "Decisions made by the Gay and Lesbian Consultative Forum if not to the liking of Policy and Resources Committee could be easily overturned."[82]

In Manchester, opinions differed as to the extent to which the Equal Opportunities Committee actually intervened to block initiatives. Paul Hinshaw states that decisions did get overturned and as a result the Gay Men's Sub-Committee became very weak. Councillor John Nicholson, on the other hand, speaking about the same committee, claims that it endorsed decisions of its sub-committees except where they were ultra vires.[83] The minutes of Manchester's Gay and Lesbian Sub-Committees do seem to confirm Nicholson's position. However those initiatives that were blocked tended to concern matters around which feelings ran strong.

Aside from the sometimes uneasy relations between the sub-committee and its parent committee, a more pressing issue was the avoidance of lesbian and gay committees altogether in the development of lesbian and gay policies.[84] I have already referred to some of the reasons for this, vis-a-vis concerns about negative publicity and a desire to control the release of information. According to Lorraine Trenchard:

> "Councillors (in Ealing) were happy for things to be happening so long as they were kept off the political agenda."[85]

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[82] Interview with Lorraine Trenchard.

[83] Interview with John Nicholson.

[84] See generally J. Gyford et al. (1989:190-5).

[85] Interview with Lorraine Trenchard.

Other reasons for avoiding the committee included attempts to withhold information from community activists. In Manchester, it provoked anger in the Gay Men's Sub-Committee, when, without consulted them, the personnel department abolished its own small equal opportunities unit.[86]

The growing separation in some authorities between the contents of lesbian and gay committee agendas and the work of specialist officers had serious implications for community representatives' involvement in the decision making process since they tended not to have access to work being developed outside the committee. Whilst avoiding the committee was often to give potentially controversial projects more chance of success, at the same time it meant major initiatives acquired less visibility. One effect of this was that if such work was not then implemented (as was often the case), it would have harely any impact. For it would not even have the reverberations from being raised and discussed at committee with the subsequent publicity such an action would incur. A further consequence was that it led to lesbian and gay committee agendas being frequently filled with trivial items since the important issues were kept away, and in some instances, as Richard McCance describes in chapter three, it became difficult filling the agenda altogether.

Finally, many decisions relating to lesbian and gay work were decided in meetings of the majority group. Sometimes this was prior to committee, but not always since committee decisions were not regarded as final. Hence, if a conflict arose between the lesbian and gay

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[86] Interview with Terry Waller.

committee and the relevant departmental committee over an issue, the Labour group might make a determination. Such determinations tended to reject more radical approaches since the departmental committee chair, usually a more senior member than the chair of the lesbian and gay committee, would tend to have majority support.[87] As well, away from the pressures to demonstrate a pro-gay position, other factors frequently held more weight.[88]

3. Reports, recommendations and ideological implications.

The ideological impact of lesbian and gay committees manifested itself in two principal ways. First, the committees' status as public forums meant meanings were conveyed directly to the general public. Although few people actually attended committee meetings, the discussions held and decisions made were often widely reported thanks to the presence of opposition councillors and the press. The second means of ideological communication took place via implementation. Through committee reports, recommendations and minutes, implicit and explicit sexual ideologies were conveyed to those responsible for implementing particular pieces of work.

Whichever channel, the actual ideological impact of lesbian and gay committees depended on several factors. I have previously discussed the relative influence and role played by different actors and the

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[87] Departmental committee chairs usually possessed greater power than the chair of the lesbian and gay committee. Thus, to be elected as chair of such a departmental committee would usually mean the incumbent enjoyed the support of a larger section of the Labour group.

[88] Interview with John Nicholson.

committees. I now wish to consider a third factor: the different discourses deployed. My concern is with the degree of ideological divergence that occurred both between oral and written texts, and between the discourses of different actors at committee. Since I have already discussed the discourses within specialist lesbian and gay officers reports, I here begin by considering departmental texts.

Departmental reports generally drew heavily on weak liberal-pluralist arguments, legitimating their comments and proposals by reference to pre-existing council EOPs.[89] According to Femi Otitojou:

> "Their recommendations would say we should monitor this, lets observe that, be cognisant of the other. They could go on for paragraphs without committing themselves to anything."[90]

Although the language of reports was usually carefully worded to seem constructive or at least neutral, committee members and specialist officers perceived many such reports as negative and defensive. One report presented to Lambeth Working Party for Gay Men and Lesbians by the director of social services, for example, stated:

> `There is very little research available to answer even basic questions related to the ability of gay people to provide good parenting.`[91]

Reports commonly claimed that lesbians and gays were treated the same as heterosexuals by the service; that there were no issues of lesbian or gay interest; or, alternatively, that the resources were

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[89] Interview with Femi Otitojou.

[90] Ibid.

[91] Lambeth Working Party for Gay Men and Lesbians, Agenda, item 7(b), 21 May 1984.

just not available. In Lambeth, for instance, a report by the director of finance stated:

> `The directorate...is keen to take positive action on the subject, but, as stated, little or no resources are available. If however resources were made available, the directorate would be more than delighted to play its part in improving the opportunities for lesbians and gay men.`[92]

Such written reports and their recommendations were important in shaping the ideologies conveyed to implementation officers. However, in terms of the meanings conveyed to the general public, verbal comments were just as significant. The greater freedom for verbal contributions was utilised by specialist lesbian and gay officers to elaborate on points and to make arguments that could not for political or bureaucratic reasons be put into print.[93] Specialist officers also chose those verbal strategies which would be most effective given the particular committee's composition. Jane Skeates, in her interview, describes the use of "sob sob stories" to convince heterosexual councillors.[94]

However, the ideological limitations on officers' contributions meant community representatives were sometimes used as their mouthpiece. Thus co-optees might give voice to ideologies or proposals organised out, against lesbian and gay officers' wishes, at an earlier stage in the policy process. Femi Otitojou describes how this happened in Haringey:

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[92] Ibid, Agenda, item 7(i), 21 May 1984.

[93] Interview with Jane Skeates.

[94] Ibid.

> "People (co-optees) were primed and set up... We would know if an issue was going to be sticky and we'd go to the community who'd want it even stronger than in the report. We would say if you want it stronger, then say this or that at the committee... People lost their rag at committee. Things that could never be put in a report were said. If it had come straight from the unit we would have been reprimanded. Co-optee suggestions strengthened the recommendations. Nobody would say no and it would go through."[95]

In Haringey, co-optees' verbal contributions tended to be carefully planned in advance. Elsewhere this was not the case and even in Haringey, some co-optees would make suggestions at odds with the officer-co-optee consensus.

I have said above that co-optees lacked political power and the ability to make decisions on policy. Nevertheless, however impractical or unrealistic their proposals might be, however little effect they might have on the committee's actual recommendations, they did have an effect on the comprehension of municipal policy by journalists and members of the public attending the meeting. The aspirational demands of community activists, along side their explicit criticisms of council practice, conveyed an illusion of lesbian and gay authority and influence over the council. This is a point I return to below.

The final form of verbal input I wish to consider arose from the addition of recommendations to reports. In general these tended to reinforce the already existing organisational bias: setting up working parties, increasing consultation, and referring the report to other committees. The ideological effects of such practices were ambivalent. Ostensibly, they gave an impression of municipal interest in, and commitment to, lesbian and gay `equality`. However, for people more `au

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[95] Interview with Femi Otitojou.

fait` with local authority procedures, such recommendations demonstrated the lack of any substantive action to be taken. Lesbian and gay reports would be passed from committee to committee with few, if any, concrete developments. At the same time, their passage between committees gave legitimacy to opponents' claims that lesbian and gay matters were dominating council business.

An example of this problem is evident in amendments to general reports which added recommendations such as `lesbian and gay needs should be considered`. One instance of this was a health report discussed by Haringey Lesbian and Gay Sub-Committee. One of the recommendations added by the committee stated that all future reports should take into account the health needs of lesbians and gays.[96] Whilst clearly there are health concerns specific to the lifestyle and oppression facing lesbians and gay men, this amendment was added, I would argue, largely for other reasons. A key reason was the constantly felt need to emphasise the particularity of lesbian and gay experiences in order to justify the lesbian and gay municipal project, and to detract from the paucity of more specific proposals. However, the addition of such broad, vague recommendations not only created the superficial impression, when the report was referred to other committees, that the council prioritised lesbian and gay concerns, it also reinforced the perception of homosexuals as a homogenous category of person - a third sex, with their own particular anatomy and health requirements.

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[96] Haringey Lesbian and Gay Sub-Committee, Minutes, item 20, 21 October 1986.

Other recommendations added by committee fell into three groups. The first two, whilst not making explicit a more radical sexual politics, strengthened resolutions by adding statements of support or opposition, or by demanding that the service in question generally improve conditions for lesbians and gays. The third category entailed the addition of very specific recommendations, such as the request that the library service stock a particular book or magazine. Whilst the first two kinds of recommendations functioned rhetorically to reinforce the need for substantial changes to achieve equal opportunities, the third, by focusing on apparently minor matters, suggested the trivial nature of lesbian and gay concerns. Yet, paradoxically, it was this third category of resolutions that proved most successful in terms of implementation, as I discuss below.

Whilst officers wrote the majority of reports, the suggestions that formed the basis for action came from councillors rather than co-optees. Thus, in terms of shaping the ideologies conveyed to implementing officers, the impact of the committee as an open forum with community representation was peripheral. However, the committee also functioned as a means of conveying information on new projects and policies direct to journalists and the public at large, both of whom learned more about proposed developments from discussion at committee than from actual implementation. Although co-optees were often intimidated and although their comments were usually dismissed or later overturned by other bodies, in terms of the impression given to people attending, their more radical statements were important; statements which could not be with certainty contained, or mobilised out in advance by senior management and the leadership. It was this public

outlet in the midst of the policy-implementation process that many senior councillors and officers underestimated - to their cost.[97] Their cynical belief that the implementation process would weed out troublesome initiatives and water down others, neglected the discursive impact and authority, committee discussion and, in particular, its decisions still held.

E. IMPLEMENTATION FAILURE.

Within traditional political science, implementation has not been seen as a major problem. It was assumed that once a decision had been made, it would then be carried out as planned. More recently, such assumptions have been widely challenged (B. Hogwood and L. Gunn, 1984:196). My research also reveals the highly contested nature of implementation, for the post-committee stage of lesbian and gay work was as much a period of negotiation, lobbying and compromise as its earlier counterparts. In this final section, I examine the extent to which lesbian and gay initiatives were implemented, consider some of the problems, and outline the strategies deployed to overcome them. Finally, I explore the ideological effects of this process.

1. Problems and attempted solutions.

Implementing lesbian and gay initiatives took a number of forms. Sometimes the work was carried out by specialist lesbian and gay officers, for example, organising cultural events or staff training.

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[97] Interview with Richard McCance.

Other times, implementation was the responsibility of particular departments, either alone or in conjunction with specialist officers.

In general, the involvement of specialist lesbian and gay officers in departmental implementation was very limited. Whilst the formal expectation was that specialist officers would liaise with the departmental officers concerned to ensure appropriate action was being taken, this rarely occurred.[98] In most local authorities, individual departments possessed considerable autonomy from the centre, despite attempts in the 1970s and 1980s to improve corporate practice. Equal opportunity units found this departmental decentralisation of power a major obstacle in their attempts to monitor and influence changes to provision.

> "People (in departments) go to their line manager and the decision (of the lesbian and gay committee) is sat on, particularly where no groundwork's been done." (J. Parker interview)

However, these were not the only implementation problems. Others included departments and officers stalling;[99] hostility;[100] ad hoc implementation;[101] lack of monitoring, and shortage of lesbian and gay officers to chase things up;[102] trying to do things in secret without the press knowing;[103] resource constraints;[104] insufficient publicity for new

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[98] Interview with Harry Joshua.

[99] Interview with Jo Fraser.

[100] Interviews with Marilyn Taylor and John Nicholson.

[101] Interview with Chris Root.

[102] Interviews with Paul Hinshaw, Chris Root and Harry Joshua.

[103] Interview with Paul Hinshaw.

initiatives;[105] and lack of proper work with front line staff,[106] particularly important if the initiative might be perceived as limiting their discretion and freedom of action.

Clearly such problems were not unique. Similar difficulties have been recorded by people working in other areas where policies are controversial and where implementation is the responsibility of departments not in charge of drawing up the proposals (see chapter seven).[107] However, the scale of the problem in respect of lesbian and gay work was extreme. Many of the people I interviewed remarked that after three or four years of action, almost nothing had been achieved.[108]

Whilst I would suggest that implementation was not in the main afforded sufficient priority, nevertheless, specialist officers made a number of attempts to overcome implementation problems. Member, officer and committee structures were used to expedite matters. At member level, one approach involved the chair of the lesbian and gay (or parent) committee taking up the matter with the chair of which ever service was causing problems.[109] This strategy sometimes worked if the departmental chair was both sympathetic and effective. Usually,

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[104] Interview with Sandra Plummer.

[105] Ibid.

[106] Ibid.

[107] See, for example, H. Ouseley (1984).

[108] Interviews with John Nicholson, Paul Hinshaw and Richard McCance.

[109] Interviews with Paul Hinshaw and Richard McCance.

however, they chose to endorse the decisions of their own departmental officers as to why work could not be carried out.[110]

A second approach was for lesbian and gay specialist officers to request their line manager to resolve the problem with her or his equivalent within the relevant department. Where a good relationship existed between lesbian and gay officers and their manager, such as in Haringey, this was sometimes attempted. However, in authorities like Camden, the line manager was either too senior to be willing to intercede or, as in Nottingham and Manchester, too closely identified with lesbian and gay work to be effective.

The third strategy entailed using the formal decision making forum.

> "We used the committee to put pressure on departments because (lesbian and gay) officers had no status." (C. Root interview)

Lesbian and gay committees would request or even try to insist on implementation updates from departments. However, the production of such reports was infrequent and tended to be preceded by a long time lag from the date of request. Bob Crossman states that his committee in Islington never received implementation reports. Consequently, he had no idea whether initiatives were implemented or not. On the whole, committee members did not force the issue. Two reasons for this stand out; first, many, particularly those who were less experienced, assumed implementation was taking place; second, questions of implementation were seen as more frustrating and less interesting than going on to develop new work.

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[110] Interview with Paul Hinshaw.

Finally, the most frequently adopted procedure for facilitating better implementation was to use informal networks,[111] and to work in areas where influential and senior officers were more sympathetic. This, though, had its own problems. It meant work tended to be fragmented, developed in services where officers were interested, but not where they were hostile. As a result, some of the worst departments tended to be neglected. Informal networks also had their limitations.

> "Terry Day (the co-ordinator) said use supportive workers in departments, but they don't have the power." (P. Hinshaw interview)

Lesbian specialist officers found this to be particularly a problem. Lesbians tended to be at lower levels in departments than gay men and therefore were less able to advance initiatives.[112] Moreover, Chris Root found that many closet lesbians avoided her in order that their own sexual orientation would not be called into question.

2. Minimal implementation and policy perceptions.

In the interviews carried out, I asked people if the lesbian and gay initiatives implemented, differed significantly from the decisions made at committee. What ideological change did policies and projects undergo between formal decision and implementation? The general response was that policies were not usually watered down,[113] or changed.[114] Rather,

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[111] Interview with John Nicholson; see also generally R. Greenwood (1987:303-4).

[112] Interviews with John Nicholson and Chris Root.

[113] Interview with Sandra Plummer.

[114] Interviews with Emmy Doye and Terry Waller.

they were just not implemented, or, if implemented, carried out in a highly ad hoc manner[115] with little dissemination to the public or workforce as to what the policies meant or entailed.[116]

In any implementation new officers become involved, working with different `policy frames`, that is different interpretive frameworks through which they understand and conceptualise what the policy or project entails. The extent to which this differs from the initial `policy frames` depends on the outlook of the implementers and the degree to which the original developers are involved (B. Hogwood and C. Gunn, 1984:119). Thus, in the case of lesbian and gay work, where lesbian and gay specialist officers worked closely with those implementing the initiative, the interpretive shift was less than where departments passed on responsibility to implementing officers acting without the involvement of central units. Such an ideological shift was not however automatically to the right. In some cases, implementation could potentially be more radical than earlier policy development if carried out by committed people away from the scrutiny and control of senior officers.[117]

However, in general, the lack of large scale changes and the emphasis on individualistic implementation, forced lesbian and gay work even further in the direction of marginal modifications (see chapter seven). In most cases, senior management's refusal to <u>insist</u> on

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[115] Interviews with Bob Crossman and Chris Root.

[116] Interview with Sandra Plummer.

[117] See generally S. Maynard-Moody et al. (1990:833).

implementation meant the kinds of work that could take place tended to be small-scale projects that individual workers could implement with minimal (or no extra) resourcing.[118] In cases where front-line workers acted on their own initiative, developments tended to be cautious and incremental. Even with paper policies, senior management could not necessarily be relied on to provide support should social workers, teachers, community workers and so on come up against opposition.[119] Within such an environment, it was also hard for policies to "stick".[120] Without adequate resourcing and monitoring, even those policies that were implemented, tended to fade quickly and disappear.

These problems confirmed perceptions of lesbian and gay work as tangential and peripheral. Anti-discriminatory discourses, prevalent in the earlier stages of policy development, were barely apparent in what was conveyed to the public by the way initiatives were actually carried out. Rather, the ad hoc, individualised manner of implementation conveyed the impression that such initiatives were both ridiculous and unnecessary, lacking municipal legitimacy and support. Those officers who did attempt to put into practice policies in this area were frequently perceived as acting in a self-interested, unprofessional manner, giving disproportionate time and attention to an insignificant minority interest.

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[118] "Officers were allowed to be unco-operative without incurring any risk of disciplinary action," interview with Paul Hinshaw.

[119] Interview with Bob Crossman.

[120] Ibid.

This perception was compounded by the measures adopted in attempts to overcome implementation obstacles. Taking matters to Labour group and senior management meetings or placing them on departmental committee agendas meant many council officers and committee members increasingly perceived lesbian and gay issues as inappropriate, as a diversion from `real` concerns. As a result of implementation difficulties, lesbian and gay issues were taken by councillors and officers to senior management and member forums. However, once there, the small concrete changes often being demanded contrasted unfavourably with the seemingly larger, more serious matters taken up at the same levels.[121]

Whilst anti-discriminatory measures for lesbians and gays generally failed to be operationalised in any meaningful way, targeted provision within lesbian and gay communities, for example, arts events and youth groups, was more successfully implemented. Yet because of the context, the ideological impact of the latter was both problematic and contradictory. On the one hand lesbians and gay men received benefits, in particular a strengthening of community as a result of cultural initiatives. But, at the same time, specially targeted provision tended to reinforce the view amongst less sympathetic people that lesbians and gay men were hedonistic and privileged, receiving special treatment from local authorities at a time when other work was being cut.

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[121] This was paradoxically exacerbated by the fact that lesbian and gay matters like other EOPs had relatively easier formal access to senior decision-making bodies than equivalent issues of service provision, which had a denser hierarchical structure.

F. CONCLUSION.

In this chapter, I have examined the ways in which more progressive and controversial policy proposals were organised out. The first two stages of development - identifying basic approaches and developing initiatives prior to committee - witnessed initiatives being watered down, withdrawn and delayed. Lesbian and gay specialist officers played a role in this process, learning which ideas to keep to themselves and which policies were inappropriate given the state of media attention or electoral proximity. At the third stage - the committee meeting - I argued greater openness and less bureaucratic control produced unpredictability in terms of the contributions made. However, the lack of power of both committee and members, in conjunction with the obstacles facing successful implementation meant very few policies were actually operationalised.

To what extent does this failure explain the enigma raised at the beginning of this thesis, namely why lesbian and gay policies were ever taken on by local government? Was it because such policies could be rendered harmless by the bureaucratic process that they were deemed safe to be municipally incorporated? In chapter seven, I discuss this point in more depth. However, as the following chapter reveals, absolute containment proved an impossible guarantee and some policies managed to slip through. Even for the majority that did not, the task of maintaining control over lesbian and gay work proved a fraught and stressful business for the authorities concerned.

In this chapter, I have also explored the relationship between structure and agency in shaping the way more progressive initiatives were organised out. The complex, interactive process revealed contests the argument that policies were moderated or undermined purely as a result of elite actors' demands or, alternatively, that the only determinants were environmental factors and concerns. Each shaped and largely reproduced the other, undermined only by those prepared to put lesbian and gay policy development above all other concerns.

CHAPTER FIVE.

POLICY MAKING, DISCURSIVE STRUGGLE AND HOMOSEXUALITY.

A. INTRODUCTION.

On 8 May 1986, Haringey borough elections returned a Labour leadership with an increased majority.[1] It was a victory that surprised many despite traditional Labour Party support in the borough. For in common with other authorities controlled by the new urban left, Labour in Haringey fought the elections on an unusually progressive manifesto prioritising the needs of oppressed and disadvantaged groups. [2]

Haringey's commitment to challenging racism had already become the focus of right-wing antagonism. This culminated in the media, police and elite politicians' response to the uprising (6 to 7 October 1985), on Broadwater Farm, an estate with a large Black community, and their reaction to the infamous comment attributed to Haringey council leader, Bernie Grant, that the police deserved a good hiding. However, from April 1986 until the spring of 1988, Haringey came under attack for another of its political objectives: the implementation of equality for lesbians and gay men. One set of initiatives drew more attention than any other. This was Haringey's policy of `positive images`, which aimed

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[1] The London borough of Haringey is situated in a high density residential area, approximately ten miles north of London's West End. It is a single tier authority and as a Outer London borough has been historically responsible for providing its own education provision. It has a population of approximately 200,000, almost half of whom are from minority ethnic communities (calculated by Association of London Authorities from 1981 census data).

[2] See introduction to Haringey Labour Party, Manifesto, 1986. See also B. Cant (1991:166-167); M. Durham (1991:ch. 6).

to challenge the discrimination and inequality within the education system faced by lesbian and gay pupils and staff.

My primary objective in exploring the struggle over `positive images` is to examine what happens when the internal mechanisms of ideological containment, as described in chapter four, break down. To what extent, in circumstances such as those of Haringey, do external forces intervene and what means of power are at their disposal? In this chapter, I explore the efficacy of textual strategies (written and oral)[3] which aimed to reinterpret `positive images`, as well as outlining other techniques or means of power. Such techniques and strategies often co-exist. Statutes, for instance, operate discursively as texts as well as by prohibiting or directly influencing behaviour.[4]

The second objective of this chapter is to explore the concept of policy. By what means do we identify the parameters and substance of, for example, local government policies? To what extent are such meanings consensual and fixed? In raising these questions I wish to challenge the idea that a policy means what policy-makers and implementers say it means. I also want to contest the notion that there are clearly defined policy-makers and implementers. In this study of `positive images` both categories were much more complex than the conventional policy making view would suggest (M. Burch and B. Wood, 1983:32-3).

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[3] See E. Roe (1989) on structural and textual factors that shape the effectiveness of competing policy interpretations.

[4] Foucault makes this point in relation to torture which he argues is both violent and lethal, but also functions ideologically by forcing the body to signify; see D. MacDonell, (1986:ch. 6).

B. THE TALE OF `POSITIVE IMAGES`.

The 1986 Labour Party manifesto, which formed the basis of Haringey council's `positive images` policy, only briefly referred to gays and education. However, it committed the council to supporting the right of educational workers to be `openly lesbian or gay at work`; supported students `realising their own gayness` and aimed to `begin the process of ensuring...lesbianism and gayness are treated positively in the curriculum`.[5]

On 2 June 1986, the manifesto was formally endorsed and adopted by the council at its annual meeting. Shortly afterwards, Haringey council's lesbian and gay unit[6] wrote to all head teachers in the borough to advise them of the policy and inform them of a `fund for curriculum projects from nursery through to further education, which are specifically designed to be anti-racist, anti-sexist and to promote positive images of lesbians and gays, and of people with disabilities`.[7]

As a result of this letter, sent without consulting the education department, the storm over the council's lesbian and gay policies,

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[5] Haringey Labour Party, Manifesto, 1986.

[6] Haringey council's lesbian and gay unit started work on 1 April 1986. It comprised of eight workers, was the largest lesbian and gay unit in Britain, and divided its work into policy, staff training and community outreach. The unit reported to a Lesbian and Gay Sub-Committee whose parent was the Community Affairs Committee. The Sub-Committee comprised of councillors who were chairs of other committees, two other back-bench councillors, and lesbian and gay community representatives who formed a majority on the Sub-Committee.

[7] Letter from Haringey lesbian and gay unit to all head teachers, June 1986.

brewing since the unit's establishment and 1986 local election campaign,[8] exploded. By the mid-summer of 1986, the Parents Rights Group (PRG) had formed, with the ostensible purpose of opposing `the council's policy to promote among children the belief that homosexuality is an acceptable alternative to heterosexuality`.[9] They and Tottenham Conservative Association spent the summer months distributing leaflets, petitions, and holding rallies against `plans to introduce homosexual education`.[10] Meanwhile, questions were asked in the House of Lords,[11] and ministerial disquiet demonstrated by the Secretary of State for Education, Kenneth Baker.[12]

The lesbian and gay unit's letter took Haringey council and the Borough Labour Party by surprise. The council leadership and education service were furious that the unit had ignored the `proper` procedures.[13] They argued the policy should have been developed slowly and gradually with education taking the primary responsibility.[14] That way, it was claimed, opposition would have been minimised.[15] The unit

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[8] See, for example, the Daily Mail, 2 May 1986, `The politics of feminism...Women's groups have drawn up a `lesbians' charter` aimed at turning a left-wing town hall into a fortress of feminism.`

[9] See leaflet entitled `Parents Rights Group` (undated)

[10] Tottenham Conservative Association leaflet, part of campaign for `normal family life` (undated).

[11] See `Haringey Council: School Lessons`, House of Lords, col. 552-554, 28 July 1986.

[12] See Daily Express, 29 July 1987; `Minister acts over `gay` lessons storm`.

[13] See interviews with Soreh Levy and Vince Gillespie.

[14] Interview with Bob Harris.

[15] Interview with Steve King.

and lesbian and gay activists disagreed. Had they not taken immediate action on the basis of manifesto commitments (subsequently council policy), nothing, they argued, would have happened.[16]

As a result of the initial confusion and disputation within the council, responsibility fell on community activists to take the initiative in opposing the right's political activity against Haringey council. In the late summer of 1986, Tottenham Communist Party called a meeting of sympathetic progressives `to counter the Tottenham Tories on the Gay Classes issue`.[17] On 2 September 1986, Positive Images (PI), `a community campaign for lesbian and gay rights in Haringey`[18] was born.[19]

The autumn of 1986 saw a gradual escalation, as PI, Haringey Labour Party, the PRG, sections of the church, Tottenham Conservative Association and other groupings confronted each other over the proper response of an educational system to homosexuality.[20] Within the coalition against a pro-gay policy, the church was a key participant. Whilst some christian groupings, such as the Gay Christian Movement, were supportive of the policy, in the main the public response of

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[16] Interview with Soreh Levy.

[17] Minutes of Positive Images, 2 September 1986. Tottenham is the eastern constituency within Haringey.

[18] Ibid.

[19] For discussion on the internal problems the group Positive Images encountered, see B. Cant (1991:169); D. Cooper (1989:54-5).

[20] M. Durham (1991:112-3) discusses the different groups that came together to oppose `positive images`. Others included: Tottenham Parents Group, a break-away group from the PRG; Christian Action, Research and Education; and the Conservative Family Campaign.

Catholic, Anglican and Baptist spokespeople and particularly of fundamentalists (B. Cant, 1991:168) was to back the stand taken by the PRG. In the winter of 1986/7, opposition to the policy drew the support of the New Patriotic Movement, a right-wing religious group connected to the Unification church.[21] Yet it is important to make clear at this point that although the right dominated the membership and strategy of opponents, the policy was also opposed by non-aligned as well as Labour Party supporters hostile to homosexuality.[22]

In addition to these locally based groups, the struggle over the validity and meaning of lesbian and gay rights in education took place in the media (see chapter six) and in national political forums. In these diverse locations, each side attempted to assert its definition and interpretation of `positive images`, as Haringey's educational policy on homosexuality quickly became known. At the same time, Haringey council, under pressure from all sides, hastened to set in motion development of its own corporate position. By the early spring of 1987, the education service, in conjunction with the lesbian and gay unit, had established a curriculum working party to develop `guidelines for anti-heterosexist approaches in schools and colleges and to review and`develop resource materials`.[23]

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[21] See B. Cant (1991:168); M. Durham (1991:114).

[22] M. Durham (1991:113) discusses the dispute that emerged in the PRG because some members were critical of the group being used as a platform for the Conservative Party. He also argues (1991:ch. 7) that it is wrong to equate the moral lobby with right-wing forces.

[23] Education Committee, Minutes, item A162, 30 September 1986. `Heterosexism` is a term whose use in local government policy-making has been highly contentious. In the GLC Charter for lesbian and gay rights, Changing the world, it is defined as `an attitude of mind that categorises and then unjustly dismisses as inferior a whole group of fellow citizens. In the case of heterosexism, the oppression appears

Nevertheless many supporters and advocates of `positive images` considered the council's actions tardy (D. Cooper, 1989:51). Some felt the council was simply shielding the unit's faux pas without any real commitment to developing policy. This perception was disputed by councillors and officers. However, the council's slow reaction did allow the right to gain the upper hand in setting the terms of the debate. Two events in particular illustrate this. One was the national outcry, in September 1986, over Jenny lives with Eric and Martin, a children's book about a young girl visiting her gay father and his lover, supposedly available to Haringey school-children (see chapter six). The second was the hunger fast, in January 1987, of the Reverend Rushworth Smith, a local priest, who threatened to fast until death if the council did not retract their `positive images` policy. Both events were extensively and sympathetically covered by the popular media, which, in conjunction with politicians and others, began to precipitate a moral panic[24] that climaxed, according to Gyford et al. (1989:312), with the Conservative victory in the 1987 general elections. The right's use of `positive images` to advance their electoral position can be seen by the following advertisement placed in several of the daily press. Incorporating a photograph of a leading PRG member, it contained the caption:

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to assume that no-one can naturally be homosexual but must be a failed or corrupted heterosexual`.

Such a definition is problematic in emphasising personal attitudes rather than institutional practices and by conceiving of sexuality as pre-discursive, that is naturally or biologically given. Other definitions of heterosexism focus on discriminatory institutional practices; see chapters four and seven.

[24] See S. Cohen (1972); J. Weeks (1985:45); whilst attempts were made to construct a moral panic, it cannot be assumed that recipients or readers `read` the texts in the way required; see chapter six.

> "My name is Betty Sheridan. I live in Haringey. I'm married with two children. And I'm scared. If you vote LABOUR they'll go on teaching my kids about GAYS & LESBIANS instead of giving them proper lessons." Signed E. Sheridan[25]

Yet despite the right's national victory in June 1987, at a local grass-roots level, PI and Haringey Black Action[26] continued to proffer a challenge. On 2 March 1987, they organised a march through the streets of Haringey. Entitled `smash the backlash`, it mobilised between 2,000 and 4,000 people in `defending lesbian and gay rights`. The alliances formed around the march coalesced further in the winter and spring of 1987/8 in opposition to clause 28 of the Local Government Bill, which proscribed the promotion of homosexuality by local authorities. Not only lesbians and gay men mobilised, but others as well from artistic, political and legal communities.

Coterminous with the subsequent introduction of the Local Government Act 1988, S. 28, Haringey council published its report on `positive images`. In over one hundred pages, Mirrors round the walls provided a thorough discussion on how educational provision could challenge heterosexism and provide a more adequate service for lesbian and gay students and staff. The report carefully located itself within the new proscriptive statutory framework, but its publication was too late for widespread implementation, although individual schools and educational

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[25] See Capital Gay, 12 June 1987; `mysterious bigots fund £100,000 ads...a secret organisation has paid for anti-gay advertisements to appear in national newspapers...The full-page advertisements have appeared in The Sun and The Evening Standard.`

[26] Haringey Black Action (HBA) was formed in December, 1986, to oppose homophobia in the black community and racism amongst white people, particularly the racism of white gays. See also B. Cant (1991:170).

institutions took up some of its proposals. The political, financial and legal climate of Haringey council had changed over the two years since `positive images` was first mooted. As a result principally of central government (but also of Labour Party) policy, the council had neither the resources, the political commitment, nor the legal power to introduce such changes within its schools. Yet, despite this, the comprehensiveness of Mirrors round the walls, ensured that it was in demand by educationalists, local government officers, and lesbian and gay activists both nationally and internationally.

Such then was the patterning of events surrounding `positive images`. I have discussed the mobilisation of the right and the different forces that coalesced in support of, and in opposition to, the policy. I now wish to consider how effective each side was and the means of power they deployed. I begin by examining how the policy was conveyed by its advocates and opponents; first, I discuss the portrayal of `positive images` by Haringey council and the policy's supporters. Despite differences of interpretation within the council,[27] and between sections of the council and organisations such as PI and HBA, the publicly pronounced,[28] shared desire to see something positive happen created a working consensus around several broad themes.[29]

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[27] For example, there were keenly felt differences between the lesbian and gay unit and education service.

[28] Some senior officers and Labour councillors may have personally opposed the policy and done little to encourage it. However such attitudes were not publicly expressed during this period.

[29] For pragmatic and other reasons, some more radical advocates of `positive images` chose to articulate a less radical sexual politics. This is a point I return to in chapter seven.

C. WHAT WAS `POSITIVE IMAGES`?

1. Liberal-pluralism and multiculturalism.

The council's liberal-pluralist approach to sexual politics, and to homosexuality in particular, strongly influenced its discourse on `positive images`. Indeed, since the policy was never formally implemented, Haringey's public articulation of a liberal sexual politics during the struggle was seen by some as the key contribution `positive images` made.

Haringey council and its education service presented sexual orientation as an immutable, unlearned aspect of identity,[30] and homosexuality as a quality possessed by a relatively stable proportion of the community:

> `Many of the young people in our schools or colleges (estimates vary around 10%) will be lesbian or gay,...`[31]

Since homosexuality constituted the reality of some people's lives, young people needed to be aware of this, both to understand their community's diversity and to function within it.

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[30] Foucault (1984:61-5) discusses the historical relationship between sex and truth; see also the discussion by Seidler (1987:92) on the nineteenth century roots of the notion that by understanding our sexuality we will understand what is distinctive and individual about ourselves.

However, whilst sexuality may not express our inner-most essence, in any transcultural, transhistorical way, it has I would argue in modern Britain, a social and political `reality` which should not be underestimated.

[31] See Haringey education service leaflet, entitled, `What every parent needs to know about lesbian and gay issues` (undated).

> `We believe that everyone in the Education Service has a responsibility to the community which we serve to encourage social harmony and respect for ...cultural differences.`[32]

`Positive images` in this respect was a policy for <u>all</u> young people and educational workers. However, its primary focus was lesbians and gay men. The council and education service acknowledged the discrimination, prejudice and marginalisation homosexuals experienced. Perceiving such a situation as wrong, they wished to provide a remedy or at least ameliorate its worst aspects.

> `...the [Education] Service would wish to help deal with the problems which lesbians and gay men, their parents, their children and their friends face, arising from the way in which some people appear to deny their existence or exercise prejudice and discrimination against them.`[33]

To Haringey council, homosexuality was then an issue of minority group need. Lesbians and gays were perceived as a section of the community whose `problems` arose from their identity as `other` thus inciting hatred and fear.

> `Many groups within our Society are treated unfairly and put down because of who they are...Our attitudes can be shown in many small acts...added together they could make people feel unwanted and undervalued...Young people who are lesbian and gay need to build their own self-confidence...(many) still have to socialise away from the rest of society to support each other.`[34]

Although terms such as `heterosexism` were used, (largely as a result of the work and politics of the lesbian and gay unit), emphasis was placed on challenging the repression of homosexual expression and identity, as well as heterosexuality's illusory claims to an <u>exclusive</u>

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[32] Ibid.

[33] Education Committee, <u>Report</u>, `Equal opportunities - lesbians and gay men`, 30 September 1986.

[34] `What every parent needs to know`, supra n. 31.

truth. The connections between sexuality, gender and power, on the other hand, were largely ignored (see chapter eight).

Haringey's ambivalent pluralism emerged out of an uneasy synthesis between the demands and politics of lesbian and gay communities and the liberalism of local government. As a result, PI and HBA, whilst publicly supporting `positive images`, also expressed unease that Haringey council lacked a real understanding and analysis of sexual politics. As a result, they argued, its position frequently dissolved into a sexual moralism. Vince Gillespie, chair of Haringey Lesbian and Gay Sub-Committee and member of PI put it this way:

> " Within PI there was a clear perspective on liberation... Council policy was different...They supported equal opportunities without any fundamental understanding...that meant a liberal approach - not wanting to be horrible, being nice to all people."[35]

Whilst the ideological framework of `positive images` was apparent from the beginning, concrete details as to what the policy would entail were slow to emerge from the education service and were for the most part tentative.[36] Despite the frequent use of the term `positive images` to represent the policy as a whole, providing young people with role

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[35] Interview with Vince Gillespie.

[36] See Education Committee, Report, `Equal opportunities - lesbians and gay men`, 30 September 1986.
`There will naturally be a range of other related development activities which will flow from the committee's stated policy position...The Council policy statement signals the setting up of a fund...Members will wish to consider the timing and scale of the financial provision envisaged...`(para 2.11)
`All these are areas for detailed consideration, and for the development of guidelines for schools and colleges about education in personal relationships, curricula content and support materials...` (para 2.12 (b))

models was only one part, indeed an under-developed part of a wider strategy (see chapter three). Other possibilities included:

> `staff in schools and colleges preventing name-calling...supporting lesbian and gay staff who are open about themselves...making sure all staff get to know about this issue,...in health and sex education...not avoiding the mention of lesbians and gay men...making students aware that lesbians and gay men have made significant contributions...`[37]

Yet even these were only `possibilities`. This inability of Haringey education service to come forward with an authoritative version of what `positive images` would mean practically in classrooms and schools was a major strategic blunder, leaving the opposition free to provide their own equally authoritative version.[38]

Similarly problematic was the tone adopted by the education service in discussing the policy and the progress it was making. Particularly in its early stages (autumn 1986), the service was determined to minimise `positive images` role and remit. A letter from the chief education officer (CEO) to parents stated:

> `There have been many newspaper and T.V. reports recently...some have gone so far as to suggest that the Council has asked schools to change their policy on sex education to include the "teaching of homosexuality". I would like to reassure you that these reports are not true...`[39]

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[37] `What every parent needs to know`, supra n. 31.

[38] However, see comments of B. Cant (1991) in which he criticises the judgmental approach of progressive commentators to Haringey council and other councils engaged in similar work. Cant argues that more emphasis should be put on the power and opposition of the right, rather than seeing the problems as rooted in councils' own mistakes. This is a fair point. Although here I focus on the limitations internal to Haringey council's strategy, elsewhere in this thesis, I stress the lack of `real` choice open to local government.

[39] CEO letter to parents, 27 October 1986.

Although this tone was largely adopted because of the letter's intended audience - parents - a similar tone is evident throughout most of the education service's literature on `positive images`, including committee reports targeted at councillors. In the 1987 leaflet, `What every parent needs to know`, delivered to every household in the borough, the format adopted was to answer hypothetical parental `queries`. Yet to what extent did this reinforce notions that `positive images` and homosexuality could be dangerous if incorrectly handled?

> `Wouldn't this mean a lot of students will have "gay ideas" put in their heads?...The newspapers said that four-year olds would be taught "homosexual practices". Is this true?`[40]

Haringey education service, responding to concerns raised principally by the PRG about `positive images`, were anxious to assure parents nothing would happen without their involvement and that the policy's development would be slow. As the CEO stated in his letter to parents, `(a)ll this will take some time.` Thus, `parental concerns`, as pronounced by the PRG, that five year olds would receive homosexual lessons, were given some degree of legitimacy by the service as being representative of the fears of parents as a whole. In this way, Haringey implicitly affirmed the right's assumption that parents were not only heterosexual but furthermore hostile to a `positive images` policy. Moreover, by focusing on the policy's insignificance, the council was diverted from its primary textual objective: explaining how the policy's introduction was a response to the reality of lesbian and gay oppression.[41]

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[40] `What every parent needs to know`, supra n. 31.

[41] The `positive images` texts also seriously understated the existence of resistance by lesbians and gay men and their struggle for liberation. Perhaps it was felt that acknowledgement of this would

The council's defensive posture contrasted with that of the community group, Positive Images (PI), who articulated an optimism about the policy. At Full Council on 20 October 1986, a PI spokesperson put it this way:

> "...the council has four years to turn something, often just a line in an equal opportunities policy into something which through information and education becomes a very positive thing which Haringey should be very proud of and upfront about."[42]

2. Promotion, corruption and liberal education.

In the discursive struggle over `positive images`, different sections of the right - including the Conservative Party, PRG and various Christian denominations - challenged the council and PI,[43] contesting their interpretation of the policy.[44] The extent to which the right intentionally and purposefully interpreted `positive images` against the grain of Haringey council texts is uncertain. On the one hand, the policy was undoubtedly `distorted` for electoral and political reasons; on the other, ideological and religious factors also affected the interpretations and explanations the right provided. It is important also to remember that the right, like the left, was a

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scare heterosexuals, but in not doing so, it created the impression of a victimised, distressed, minority group.

[42] Transcribed video taken of meeting.

[43] Haringey Black Action (HBA) was largely ignored by the right, although struggles took place between HBA and traditionalists in the Black community (personal knowledge).

[44] For work on the British Right in the 1980s see I. Crewe and D. Searing (1988); M. David (1986); M. Durham (1989); J. Gould and D. Anderson (1987); S. Hall (1988:ch. 2, 6); D. Kavanagh (1987:ch. 4).

heterogenous grouping, working with different ideologies, objectives and perspectives. These differences I hope to draw out, whilst at the same time identifying the right's publicly unified position.

The right's reading of `positive images` was based on a number of different texts, not all of which originated from Haringey council. The council's vagueness, particularly early on, gave credibility to the right's strategy of basing their interpretations on less guarded, hence more explicit, secondary texts. These included comments by other right-wing actors quoted in the press and the texts of PI. The latter, the right claimed, reflected the true purpose of the policy, despite the disclaimers of Haringey council and its education service. According to a PRG member, speaking in a deputation to Haringey council, 20 October 1986:

> "We have seen sneaking behind-the-scenes moves by the council coupled with frequent denials by council officials and employees as to exactly what is going on. Not only are we concerned about what the council states is going to take place, we are even more concerned about what has remained unsaid. I heard a member of PI on the local radio recently talking about mothers and fathers as unhelpful role models. Unhelpful to whom? Unhelpful to the 90% of children who will one day grow up to be parents themselves, or unhelpful to the members of PI in their present campaign?...<u>It is this underlying attitude of the people who are to implement the policy</u>..."[45]

Since the right argued Haringey council's own presentation of the policy could not be believed, space was created in which they could present their understanding of what `positive images` really meant and was intended to achieve. Two key strands of their interpretation concerned the policy's objectives: promoting homosexuality by means of

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[45] Supra n. 42.

`gay lessons`, and social revolution (although this latter was only identified as a policy aim by the far right).

From the first debate in the House of Lords on the subject, when Lord Monson asked whether H.M. Government approved of plans for `compulsory lessons intended to promote `positive images` of homosexuality`,[46] through to the wording of S. 28, the question of promotion - could homosexuality be promoted? - remained central. Interestingly, it was the right who took a social constructionist perspective on homosexuality, in contrast to the essentialism and biological reductionism of Haringey council. Whilst the latter denied both the desirability and possibility of promotion, the right argued that sexuality was fluid, influenced by social relations, and that therefore it needed careful direction if young people were to grow up heterosexual; a state of being, which they argued was not only socially and morally desirable, but, paradoxically, natural and normal as well.

Whilst the liberal-right remained with this contradiction, emphasising the absurdity and ridiculousness of the activity of councils like Haringey, others took the argument further. Baroness Strange claimed that as a result of the policy, civilisation would be undermined, families would disintegrate.[47] The Reverend Rushworth Smith and right-wing Haringey councillors argued this was just what Haringey council desired. According to right-wing, Conservative councillor, Pat Salim:

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[46] House of Lords, col. 552, 28 July 1986.

[47] House of Lords, col. 572, 1 April 1987.

> "They are set to use our children, to politicise and corrupt our children...all in the purpose of social revolution..."[48]

Thus, in contrast to Haringey council's attempt to understate the policy, the far right's strategy entailed going to the other extreme - linking the policy to objects of terror within dominant discourse. At Full Council on 20 October 1986, Conservative councillors equated `positive images` with the violence and authoritarianism of both fascism and communism. The moderate leader of the Conservative group on the council, less opposed to homosexuality than some in his party, focused on the issue of `mind control`.

> "I can't help thinking there's an element of George Orwell's thought police...you may think in our way or not at all".[49]

Yet the dominant discursive strategy of the right focused less on the nightmarish scenario of which `positive images` was deemed part, than on what would be taken away or lost as a result of the policy: parental rights, childhood innocence and the family unit.[50]

Parental rights formed the main focus of the right's attack and functioned on several levels. First, that parents were not being properly consulted or involved - the policy was being implemented `over their heads`. Haringey council's repeated reassurance that parents would be fully consulted remained discursively marginalised by the right and media in their presentation of the issues. Second, `positive images` was seen as undermining parental rights to decide what children

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[48] Full Council, 20 October 1986, supra n. 42.

[49] Full Council, 20 October 1986, supra n. 42.

[50] See generally R. Klatch (1987:ch. 5), M. David (1986); J. Weeks (1985:ch. 3).

should know about sex and homosexuality, how they should be told, and when they should be informed.[51] Third, `positive images`, by encouraging or promoting homosexuality, subverted the very notion of `parent`. This claim assumed (as did the others) that only heterosexuals could be and were parents.

The notion of the innocent child corrupted was a second key theme of the policy's opponents.[52] Like that of parental rights, it provided a resonance for people fearful of familial disintegration, feeling powerless in the face of rapid social change. Within the right's discourse, the child symbolised ultimate helplessness. They, whom the policy would most affect, could do nothing to stop it. To achieve the greatest rhetorical impact, the right emphasised those aspects of the policy involving young children rather than teenagers. Repeatedly, the council confirmed that the policy was primarily for secondary school children, but the image of five year olds learning about gay sex was a more powerful and seductive vision.

The third key theme - the family - linked the other two (parents and children) to wider macro-structures.[53] As Baroness Strange makes clear:

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[51] This tension between parents and professionals runs through many of the education battles of the 1980s, in which the Government and right tried to restrict the power of those educationalists perceived as hostile to and ready to oppose a new right agenda; see D. T. Evans (1989/90:86).

[52] See M. Foucault (1984:pt. 3), where he discusses how the sexed child was constructed in nineteenth century discourse. Children's engagement in sexual behaviour was both asserted and seen as posing physical and moral dangers.

[53] G. Seidel and R. Gunther (1988:118-9), each individual family is perceived within right-wing discourse as the nucleus on which the national organism is built.

> "...the whole of civilisation...and most religions, are based on the foundation of the secure family unit consisting of father, mother, child and of course grannies and grandpas, uncles and aunties..."[54]

This depiction of the family as the basic building block of a nation was central to new right discourse which rejected the notion of `society`. If the only units were family, church and nation, then homosexuals and others, outside such units, were an aberration. Indeed, as the wording of Local Government Act 1988, S. 28 makes clear, homosexuality is fundamentally incompatible with the `family`. Lesbian and gay family units can only exist as `pretensions`, second-rate copies of the real thing (D. T. Evans, 1989/90:83).

The right's contention that knowledge of homosexuality would confuse and corrupt young people by leading to sexual experimentation was rooted also in a particular understanding of the educational process. Indeed hostility to `positive images` needs to be seen within the context of ongoing attacks on progressive education.[55] The long history of opposition to `new` educational methods enabled the right credibly to present promoting homosexuality as yet another example of misguided `modern` teaching. At the same time, their depiction of the policy's effects were rooted in traditional pedagogic assumptions that pupils uncritically accepted everything they learned - empty receptacles to be filled up with knowledge - thus new ideas such as homosexuality would confuse and harm them.

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[54] House of Lords, col. 572, 1 April 1987.

[55] See for example C. Chitty (1989:ch. 8); R. Dale (1989:ch. 6); K. Jones (1989:ch. 1-2); A. M. Wolpe and J. Donald (1983).

The effectiveness of the right's portrayal of `positive images` in influencing public beliefs is difficult to ascertain. What is apparent however is the way the right were able to use dominant discursive themes such as those outlined above, exploiting Haringey council's lack of clarity around `positive images`.[56] Thus, promoting `positive images` became promoting homosexuality; opposing heterosexism became opposing heterosexuality.

In the following chapter I discuss the right's symbiotic relationship with the mass media, and the impact this had on their ability to communicate and publicise their interpretation of `positive images`. Haringey council, on the other hand, possessed much more limited mediums. Apart from minimal access to the mass media (see chapter six), it relied on little read council leaflets and bulletins, to convey its position. Thus, the council's voice was marginalised, hindering its ability to convey its version of a policy which depended for its survival and achievement on public comprehension and support. Haringey could not compete with the institutional support offered to opponents of `positive images` that enabled their interpretation to be widely and effectively publicised.

Yet, despite such advantages, the discourse of the policy's opponents also lacked ideological and political autonomy. In public statements, almost all of the right, excepting sections of the church and far right, emphasised their <u>opposition</u> to discrimination against

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[56] See M. J. Shapiro et al. (1988) for discussion on the relationship between discursive dominance and actors' impact on the decision-making process.

lesbians and gay men. At Full Council on 20 October 1986 at which `positive images` was debated, the PRG representative began by stressing the `common ground` that existed.

> "We acknowledge gays and lesbians living in communities are subject to prejudice. We are not inciting hatred against gays and lesbians. We don't object to the existence of this element of our society or their right to be regarded as people..."[57]

Whatever their personal beliefs, the fact such a statement was deemed necessary for the right's public credibility, demonstrates the dominance of a quasi-liberal sexual politics. Nevertheless, the hegemonic nature of such a politics was equivocal as the right's attacks on `positive images` reveal.

D. DISCURSIVE STYLE AND TECHNIQUES OF POWER.

In examining the texts and practices of the parties involved, five political styles encompassing different techniques of power stand out: (1) populist, (2) representative, (3) bureaucratic, (4) participative and (5) elitist. Below, I outline how these styles operated and consider how effective each was in shaping the discourse, mood and political responses to `positive images`.

1. Populist.

Whilst most sections of the right drew on popular sentiment, particularly around the family, children, education and sexuality, the main right-wing group to use a populist strategy was the Parents Rights Group. Exploiting their public persona as a group of predominantly

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[57] Supra n. 42.

working class `mothers`, the PRG attempted to talk directly to, and on behalf of, `ordinary, concerned parents` like themselves. Media access was exploited to draw people's attention to what was happening in Haringey, and to depict the PRG as championing parental rights through their vigorous and high profile opposition to `positive images`. Perhaps the best example of their strategy was the panic they helped engineer over the availability of the book Jenny lives with Eric and Martin in local libraries (see chapter six). In this instance, the PRG gained media publicity with their claims of `raiding` Haringey libraries to remove copies of the book which they would then subsequently burn on mass fires.

The populism of the PRG lay in the way they attempted to capture and then mould public feeling, drawing on people's fears.[58] According to one member of the pro-lesbian and gay rights group, Positive Images, this was where the left fell down, unwilling or unable to `manipulate` public sentiment in the same way.

> "We were in a weak position because we were only able to use rational arguments. Most of the debate wasn't conducted very rationally at all. That was the strength of groups like the PRG, they could tap hidden fears..."[59]

The PRG and their supporters not only made full use of a sensationalistic media to convey their stance, they also drew on demagogic traditions to capture and hold an audience. The speeches of Conservative councillor, Pat Salim, illustrate this. Her vitriolic attacks against Haringey council were constructed out of a seamless

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[58] See S. Hall's discussion on `authoritarian populism` of Thatcherism (1988:ch. 6).

[59] Interview with PI member, in D. Cooper (1989:59).

flow of images whose logical flaws were largely lost due to the speed, drama and intensity of her delivery. Unlike more middle-class Conservatives, Cllr. Salim spoke with a raw anger. Thus, she appeared as one with the parents she claimed to represent against an authoritarian council.

Populist style and discourse had a significant impact on Haringey council. Deploying against the council the threat of electoral power, the PRG emphasised the number of Labour voters supporting their stand. While the Labour leadership and party dismissed such claims, they nevertheless felt sufficiently concerned to dampen development of `positive images` and to incorporate parental consultation to appease the PRG.

2. Representative.

The role of representative is the second strategy or style I wish to consider. In the `positive images` struggle, it was deployed by MPs, councillors, and the fasting priest, the Reverend Rushworth Smith. Yet, for each, the role meant something different. MPs predominantly saw themselves representing people confused by, and opposed to, the kinds of policies Haringey council was introducing.

> Mr. Greenway (MP for Ealing): ...If one has a policy as Ealing Council has, of appointing teachers regardless of sexual orientation how can the House be surprised at the parents' fears that their children will be put in the hands of perverts, practising homosexuals who are interested in children...Of course they are frightened, concerned and feeling violent..."[60]

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[60] House of Commons, col. 1090-1, 21 October 1986.

Haringey Conservative councillors took a similar position, focusing on the unpopularity of the policy and the undemocratic nature of its implementation. They even questioned whether people knew of its inclusion in Haringey's Labour Party manifesto prior to the 1986 local elections. Labour councillors challenged Conservative insinuations. They argued the 1986 election manifesto had been well publicised and was the mandate through which they represented the wishes of the borough's electorate.

In contrast to councillors and MPs, the Reverend Rushworth Smith, a local Baptist Minister, disclaimed democratic forms of representation. Instead, he presented himself as the spokesperson of God and christian people. By fasting to the death in protest at `positive images`, Rushworth-Smith deployed traditional christian imagery: a servant of God sacrificing himself for his `flock`. Thus whilst Labour and Conservative politicians fought over the legitimacy of their mandates and their competing interpretations of the electorate's wishes, Rushworth-Smith used his body to speak the nature of his representation qua sacrifice.

Throughout January 1987, the mass media covered Rushworth-Smith's apocalyptic comments on the effects of `positive images`. Yet the impact of his remarks was insignificant compared to the visual impact of his presence - first with a walking stick, then in a wheelchair covered by a blanket, too weak to stand or walk, sipping hot water from a flask. For over a month, Rushworth-Smith was ritually wheeled in to attend journalist-filled council meetings, his deteriorating physical condition symbolic of the harm and destruction `positive images` was

wrecking around him. His sacrifice and altruism accentuated, by contrast, Haringey council's aggressive, selfish policies.[61]

3. Bureaucratic.

The third political style - bureaucratic - was utilised by Haringey council, as well as by the Department of Education and Science (DES) in their correspondence with the council over `positive images`. However, whereas the bureaucratism of Haringey council reinforced the public's impression of `positive images` as impositional and autocratic, the bureaucratism of the DES facilitated their opposition towards `positive images`, without appearing overtly to undermine notions of local democracy.

Thanks to a Conservative councillor informing the DES of Haringey council's new policy,[62] the government department wrote a series of letters to Haringey's chief education officer (CEO), requesting further information.[63] The DES reminded the council's education service of the statutory framework within which the latter was obliged to work, and of ministerial displeasure at the `positive images` policy.[64] The syntax and discourse of the DES' letters stressed the limitations on local education authorities' discretion in several ways. First, the emphasis placed on statutory obligations was strategically important in

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[61] In the spring of 1987, Rushworth-Smith ceased his fast, see D. Cooper (1989:58-9).

[62] Interview with Ron Bell.

[63] DES to Haringey's CEO, 25 July 1986.

[64] DES to Haringey's CEO, 29 January 1987, 31 July 1987.

increasing the legitimacy of the DES' demands. It was an approach that also had the effect of distancing the ministerial department from central government's political agenda; the DES was acting according to the law, not simply carrying out a politician's whims. Second, Haringey education service was reminded that its discretion was limited; its duties, obligations and powers largely pre-determined. The education service was accountable first to the law and secondly to the DES; it was not an autonomous tool of local politicians.

Within this bureaucratic framework, legislative power was an important means of attacking `positive images` at a coercive as well as at an ideological level.[65] The Education (No. 2) Act (EA) 1986 and its accompanying circular reduced the power of local authorities to determine the teaching on lesbian and gay sexual issues. Instead, responsibility for sex education was given to school governors (EA 1986, S. 18, 19), the content ministerially circumscribed (EA 1986, S. 46), and certain curricular approaches to homosexuality proscribed (Circular 11/87). The Local Government Act 1988, S. 28 went even further in an attempt to render `positive images` unlawful. Although advocates of `positive images` argued that the policy did not `promote` homosexuality and that therefore S. 28 was irrelevant, in doing so, they were `forced` to relied on weak liberal-pluralist notions of sexuality which emphasised immutability and lack of sexual choice (see chapter four).

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[65] For a discussion on central government's legislative attack on lesbian and gay educational policies, see D. Cooper and D. Herman (1992); M. Durham (1991:ch. 6).

The practical impact of S. 28 has been written about elsewhere.[66] Arguably, despite its greater textual explicitness, the Section was less powerful as a means of challenging `positive images` than legislative enactments that shifted obligations, powers and duties between different bodies and actors. These latter were implemented by local authorities in a way that did not occur for the simple proscriptions of S. 28.[67] However, I would suggest neither the Education (No. 2) Act 1986, nor the Local Government Act 1988, S. 28 were as powerful a tool in obstructing and eventually halting `positive images` as the limitations on local government finance (see chapters three, four and seven).

The discursive and practical impact of legal regulation was not the DES' only resource. The government department further demonstrated its power over Haringey education service through detailed questioning of the authority about its intentions, practices and knowledge. Such scrutiny maintained a thin veneer of neutrality. The DES asked precise, formal, policy-legal questions.[68] In this way it presented itself as rational, logical and positivist, accentuating by contrast the depiction of Haringey council as propagandising and biased. Such a textual effect in turn generated the question - could a council like Haringey adequately run a borough? - particularly since it appeared

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[66] See R. Costigan and P. Thomas (1990); D. T. Evans (1989/90).

[67] S. 28 was used by authorities as an excuse for not developing pro-lesbian and gay policies, see D. Cooper and D. Herman (1992).

[68] By this I mean questions on the relationship between policy and law, such as asking "...how the Authority reconciles these policies and steps with the statutory powers and duties of ...in relation to the secular curriculum, under (various sections of Education Acts)".

unable to provide adequate, rational answers to the detailed questions being asked.

Yet, paradoxically, it was the DES and central government who were largely responsible for creating an environment in which the ministerial department's questions could not be properly answered. First, the terms of their legislative enactments created an educational regime inconsistent with the spirit of `positive images`. This is apparent in the DES letter (29 January 1987; 4(c)):

> `...let me have...an explanation of how the Authority reconciles these policies...with the statutory duties under S. 46 of the 1986 Act...to secure that any sex education is given in such a manner as to encourage pupils to have due regard to moral considerations and the value of family life;...`

Second, the DES' questions and comments boosted levels of anxiety in Haringey education service. As a result, rational policy models, targeted at eradicating prejudice and discrimination, were abandoned for incrementalist approaches which emphasised the relevance and importance of the statutory framework to any developments that would take place.

4. Participative.

The fourth political style - participative - was deployed by all three grass-roots organisations: the Parents Rights Group, Positive Images and Haringey Black Action. It was a strategy that focused on mobilising local people around one or other discursive polarity in order for them to become active in the `positive images` struggle. Activity included drawing up and circulating petitions, letter writing,

organising and attending public meetings, leafleting and lobbying, as well as holding marches and demonstrations.

The impact of grass-roots activity on the development or eradication of `positive images` is uncertain. Haringey Labour councillors claim none of the groups made a direct impact on policy development within the education service, although PI and HBA were an important source of municipal support.[69] PI members, on the other hand, argue that their presence and energy was vital to strengthening the backbone and commitment of Labour councillors, and to maintaining the policy's existence.[70] Moreover, it would appear that the level of support generated by the PRG did affect municipal behaviour, particularly within the education service, and led to the council's belated acknowledgement of `parental rights` as well as their subsequently stalling over the policy.

However, the principal impact grass-roots activism possessed was on the constantly changing equilibrium of micro-power relations within the locality. The appearance on Haringey streets of the PRG and Conservative Association, giving out leaflets, collecting signatures, and holding rallies, granted the right a physical and ideological presence it had not previously possessed at that level. Such an adjustment of power precipitated claims by several lesbian and gay activists that they felt uneasy shopping and being visibly `out` as gay on the streets. Left-wing parties running weekly street stalls also

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[69] Interviews with Bob Harris and Steve King who states: "Positive Images helped stiffen the backbone of the group".

[70] Interviews with Savi Hensman, Linda Arch and Vince Gillespie.

found themselves challenged on what they saw as their terrain, in a discursive battle they had not anticipated.

As a result, the `Smash the Backlash` march organised by HBA and PI to defend lesbian and gay rights in Haringey, represented an important contestation of the right's apparent grass-roots hegemony, and a symbolic reclamation of the streets. Subsequently, the activism against S. 28 reinforced the left's local, urban political presence.

5. Elitist.

The final strategy I wish to briefly discuss is the elitist approach adopted by the House of Lords and Secretary of State for Education towards `positive images`. Although such a strategy was only subtly and infrequently deployed in contrast to the right's more explicit populism, nevertheless, in the speeches of peers, a paternalistic attitude towards parents depicted as powerless victims, was apparent. The Lords also ridiculed Haringey council's policy from an aloofness and detachment that permitted them to see the absurd side. In so doing, the House at times trivialised the fears and concerns of those who perceived `positive images` as a very real threat.

> Lord Beloff: My Lords, does my noble friend share my amazement that the Labour Party, which derives its inspiration from those two very active heterosexuals, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, now seems determined to confine its appeal to homosexuals?
> Baroness Hooper: My lords, I note my noble friend's remarks and would refer your Lordships to the date on the Order Paper (April 1st).[11]

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[11] House of Lords, col. 572, April 1 1986.

The elitism shown by the House of Lords patronised both sides struggling over the policy although their attention reinforced the notion that `positive images` was a major issue of concern. Beyond that, the political authority of peers and central government ministers gave added credence to the discursive theme they principally deployed: the family. Kenneth Baker, Secretary of State for Education, spoke against lesbian and gay educational initiatives, not from the standpoint of government minister, but from that of parent. Thus, he raised the status of parenthood within the debate by demonstrating that even he, a government minister, felt his principal authority to speak came from his parental role. Bob Hall, leader of the Conservative group on Haringey council, did the same. In doing so, he even sought to question the legitimacy of those who were not parents speaking in the debate.

> "I'm a parent of four children and I know what they're (parents) talking about. I rather doubt that Steve King knows what I'm talking about because he's not a parent... Is Davina Cooper a parent? Does she have children?"[72]

In this way, the voice of `parent` was epistemologically privileged over and above other identifications.[73]

To conclude, both sides of the struggle deployed different styles, strategies, and means of power to elevate the authority of their respective interpretations and, amongst opponents, to defeat the policy altogether. While the council found itself deploying a bureaucratic style and means of power that alienated many, and that allowed the right to depict it as an authoritarian body imposing policies without

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[72] Bob Hall speaking at Full Council, 20 October 1986.

[73] However this was only one particular sort of parent. Progressive and gay parents were ignored by the right.

any consideration of community feeling, opponents of `positive images` utilised a wide range of strategies and styles. Despite their frequently contradictory nature, such strategies enabled right-wing forces to engage the support or acquiescence of many different sections of the community. Indeed it is arguable that their achievement was not so much to win support for their position as to present the authoritative interpretation of what Haringey council was in fact doing.[74] Thus, even amongst people sympathetic to lesbian and gay equality, many felt councils like Haringey were going too far.

E. CONCLUSION.

In this chapter I have discussed the struggle over Haringey council's lesbian and gay educational policy `positive images`. In the first part I explained how a letter sent by the lesbian and gay unit to local head teachers, by-passing the formal policy-making procedures of local government, also managed to by-pass the complex means of ideological containment described in chapter four. As a result of the letter and subsequent uproar, diverse groups and individuals mobilised both for and against the policy.

My second objective in this chapter was to problematise the meaning of policy. Despite never being formally implemented as its initial designers intended, few would query `positive images'` existence. But which of the many conflicting interpretations was `positive images`? What did the policy <u>really</u> entail? Haringey council and supporters argued that the right were interpreting the policy incorrectly,

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[74] See generally M. Hajer (1989:ch. 4).

distorting its true meaning. Yet this assumed first that the policy had a `true` meaning, and secondly that such a meaning was determined by Haringey council. I discuss below this first assumption. Before doing so, what grounds are there for the second?

Haringey's claims were based on its assumed status of initiator and developer of the policy. However, such a status can be undermined in several ways. First, it is doubtful whether Haringey can be treated as a single, coherent entity in this respect when interpretations and understandings of `positive images` differed widely between sections of the council involved. Second, gaps and uncertainty regarding aspects of the policy existed amongst municipal actors; thus, what was presented to the public lacked both closure and completeness. Third, Haringey's development and eventual abandonment of `positive images` was largely the result of external pressure. Not only did the right shape Haringey's development of the policy, but they provided as well its dominant interpretation. Indeed, it is likely many of Haringey council's own staff learned more about the policy from opponents' comments broadcasted on television or in the press than from council reports and policy statements.

Since``positive images` cannot easily be said to `belong` to the council, an alternative perspective would be to argue that there were many different `positive images` policies possessed by the right, the council and by groups, such as PI and HBA. One might argue that every group tried to implement their `policy` and that the right were most successful, since their `positive images` policy not only aided the re-election of a Conservative government, but also facilitated the

emergence of a new right-wing moralism and the subsequent disbandment of Haringey council's own policy. Yet does this kind of analysis confuse policy with strategy? Moreover, is it useful or meaningful to talk about three separate policies?

Opponents of `positive images` interpreted the policy in a way that was qualitatively different from the council's reading of it, although one might argue the gap between their interpretation and that of groups such as PI and HBA was less marked. However, in the case of a policy which worked foremost as a political metaphor it seems unhelpful to focus on which was the <u>correct</u> reading or interpretation. Of more importance perhaps are the ways in which interpretations varied and the effect such diverse `readings` had.

In this chapter I have tried to demonstrate how the meaning and content of policies such as `positive images` are neither fixed nor determined by the designations of their initiators or `owners`; rather, they are the result of an ongoing process of negotiation and conflict. Thus, the meaning ascribed varies according to the time and place at which the policy is `pinned down` to provide `answers`.[75] This contest is not one of searching for the `true` meaning. Rather, it is a discursive struggle in which different factions interpret the policy according to their own objectives, whether that is the creation of a moral panic or the development of lesbian and gay equality. As a result, the particular meaning at any one time reflects the balance of power between forces at that particular juncture, for example, in a Sun

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[75] See D. Macdonnell (1986) for comparable discussion in relation to discourse.

newspaper article or at a lobby organised by the policy's supporters. Yet, in the case of `positive images`, the balance of forces was rarely equal. Why were opponents generally more successful in shaping and interpreting the policy?

`Positive images`, despite its origins in a left-wing Labour council, existed within a broader political, social and economic framework unsympathetic to its progress.[76] It was a policy beyond the council's power to control, for they could determine neither its development nor the (pressure) groups given access to the decision-making process.[77] In part, opponents' success was due to better strategy and tactics. However, I would argue that their ideological congruence with the status quo whose discourses they were able to deploy, and their physical composition as a constellation of powerful individuals and groupings was more significant. Used against Haringey's lesbian and gay educational policy were ministerial directives, legislative enactments, financial restrictions and the outrage of media and establishment.

Yet such dominance in the struggle was never complete. Not only were the right obliged to articulate elements of a liberal sexual politics in order to retain credibility, but their very attack on `positive images` increased the visibility given to homosexuality. Although lesbians and gay men were forced on the defensive, heterosexuality to a lesser extent was as well, both by the policy of `positive images`

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[76] See generally M. Hajer (1989:ch. 3).

[77] Right-wing pressure groups made an impact on policy development, despite not being granted formal access; see the converse situation in J. Dearlove (1973) and P. Saunders (1979).

and the struggles that surrounded it. Although neither this struggle nor that around S. 28 involved the deconstruction of heterosexuality nor disidentification with it, the lesbian and gay counter-discourses articulated provided a first step. Heterosexuality's exclusive claims to the `truth` could no longer be taken for granted.

CHAPTER SIX.

THE IMPACT OF THE MEDIA IN THE STRUGGLE OVER `POSITIVE IMAGES`.

A. INTRODUCTION.

> "If you teach four year olds about sex, it's a good read. Sex is a good story. Gay sex is a better story." (B. Harris interview)

1. Homosexuality and the production of news.

In recent decades, the British mass media has responded to homosexuality with a fascination, both tempered by coyness and accentuated by horror. The contradictory message that homosexuality both is, and is not, a suitable subject for the delicate eyes and ears of the British, heterosexual public pervades the issues that receive coverage.[1] In the press, most stories or items centre around the following: revelations about the homosexual practices or identity of public figures; intra-gay violence; `sordid` sexual activities; `bizarre` practices such as self-insemination; and, since the turn of the 1980s, AIDS within the gay community. Within such accounts, certain images prevail: seduction, particularly inter-generational; sexual permissiveness; degradation; secrecy and cross-gender identification (J. Baaden, 1991:113, 120).

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[1] See J. Dickey (1987:82) who argues that media coverage of lesbian and gay issues is aimed at the heterosexual rather than homosexual public.

The media's treatment of homosexuality has been the subject of extensive criticism from within the lesbian and gay community. Much of the disapproval has focused on the tabloid press; however, to what extent are broadcasting and the broadsheet press equally open to criticism? Despite broadcasting's obligations to achieve a `proper balance` under the Broadcasting Act 1981 and its reputation for being the mass medium which provides the most accurate, detailed information (R. Collins, 1986:125), it is clear diverse perspectives on homosexuality are not treated equally. The Glasgow University Media Group has provided detailed critiques of television bias.[2] Yet identifying bias depends on there being a public consensus that valid differences of opinion exist. What does this mean in the context of homosexuality where general public opinion considers lesbian and gay sexuality to be less legitimate than heterosexuality? This point is an important one. Perceptions of broadcasting as ideologically neutral facilitate its ability effectively to convey particular interpretations and perspectives, as I discuss below.

Since the late 1980s, broadcasting has begun to widen its current affairs coverage of homosexuality. Channel four, established in part to cater for unmet tastes (C. Spry, 1991:131), has been the most pioneering in this regard. Their series `Out`, introduced in the late 1980s, depicts a different paradigm of homosexuality, one more in line with the liberal-pluralism discussed elsewhere in this thesis.[3]

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[2] Glasgow University Media Group (1976, 1980, 1982)

[3] For example, the first edition of Out on Tuesday, following shortly after S. 28, asked a couple of advertising firms to try and promote homosexuality. This was interspersed with comments from politicians and others to the effect that homosexuality could not be promoted.

A change of tone and content appears equally apparent in the coverage of lesbian and gay issues by the broadsheet press. The disdainful, patronising distance of the 1970s and 1980s has been replaced with a more sympathetic, interested coverage. Ironically, the Local Government Act 1988, S. 28 provided a turning point for the broadsheet press by placing lesbian and gay issues firmly on the national political agenda. Coverage was no longer of marginal and salubrious concern but part of the mainstream. The late 1980s and early 1990s witnessed the establishment of new lesbian and gay organisations deploying creative forms of political action, a gay `wed-in`, a `kiss-in`, leafleting of schools; known figures began to speak on lesbians and gays' behalf.

Yet, despite growing broadsheet press interest in lesbian and gay struggles for legal equality, discussion of heterosexism and homophobia has remained minimal (J. Baaden, 1991:123).[4] Moreover, during the preceding period of municipal sexual politics, papers such as the Guardian, Independent and Observer were largely silent.[5] Haringey's policy of `positive images`, for example, was treated as a misguided effort, a red herring that was enabling the right to detract attention from more important issues.[6]

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[4] Although see the Independent, 25 November 1991.

[5] See M. Durham (1991:171) on the lack of comment in the left-wing media. See also Putting the record straight, produced by Haringey lesbian and gay unit, June 1988, a digest of press cuttings from newspapers and magazines sympathetic to lesbian and gay equality.

[6] See interview with Savi Hensman; see also for example Times Education Supplement Editorial, 29 August 1986.

The silence of the broadsheet press contrasted with the extensive coverage given to lesbian and gay municipal policies throughout the 1980s by the tabloids. Homosexual initiatives were deployed, through a process of escalating signification (A. Young, 1990:52-3), as a way of attacking progressive local government in general.[7] Thus, policies such as `positive images` became a metaphor for the new urban left project. Moreover, despite opposing party political affiliations, the Daily Mail, Standard and Mirror in particular, were all clear in their opposition to policies which treated homosexuality as an acceptable sexual and social lifestyle. George Gale, writing for the Daily Mirror, 9 July 1986, described Haringey's policy as

> `lessons that threaten life. The left-wing conspiracy to brainwash children into the subversive belief that homosexuality is just as good, natural and desirable as heterosexual activity continues.`

2. Media coverage of `positive images`.

Between May 1986 and the Spring of 1988, Haringey council's lesbian and gay educational policy, `positive images`, rarely left the news. During this period well over one hundred items appeared in the press and more than twenty television and radio programmes were devoted to the issue.[8]

Although coverage all concerned one particular policy development, the stories themselves tended not to focus on `positive images`

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[7] See interview with Bob Harris; see also for example `Year of the loonies, how the lefties go potty over blacks, gays and disabled`, the Sun, 16 December 1986.

[8] These figures are a cautious estimate based on my own knowledge of mass media coverage of the policy.

directly. Instead, they clustered around particular incidents or episodes connected to the policy struggle. The first major story to break, in the early autumn of 1986, concerned the children's book Jenny lives with Eric and Martin.[9] According to the press, Kenneth Baker, Secretary of State for Education, suddenly became aware of the book's existence within the ILEA's school library service and demanded it be removed. At approximately the same time, the Parents Rights Group (PRG) discovered the book in Haringey libraries. Outraged by its existence and apparent availability to children, as I described in chapter five, PRG members claimed they would scour the libraries for copies to burn subsequently on a large fire.

As interest in the book died down through the late autumn and winter of 1986, a second story hit the media in early January 1987. This concerned the Reverend Rushworth Smith's proposed fast until death unless Haringey council withdrew its policy.[10] Finally, in the spring of 1987, after Rushworth Smith had ceased his fast, a third story emerged over a day's event for young lesbians and gay men organised by Haringey lesbian and gay unit in conjunction with the authority's youth service.[11] According to media reports, a woman attending the event was assaulted by a council officer, the police were called and subsequently, as a result of the attack, the woman apparently

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[9] See J. Baaden (1991:121). For examples of media coverage, see the Daily Mail, 16 September 1986; the London Standard, 16 September 1986; Today, 21 September 1986.

[10] For examples of coverage, see the London Standard, 10 December 1986; the Hampstead and Highgate Express, 23 January 1987; the Weekly Herald, 22 January 1987.

[11] For examples of media coverage, see the Times, 17 March 1987; the Daily Mail, 3 April 1987; the Hornsey Journal, 3 April 1987; the Sun, 22 April 1987.

miscarried. A private prosecution then commenced, at which the plaintiff, Parents Rights Group (PRG) member Rosemary Johnson, was represented by the Reverend Rushworth Smith. However, when the defendant entered the court, Johnscn declared the council had provided her with the name of the wrong man.

Whilst these three episodes formed the main media narratives, a series of other stories also emerged. Although of less interest to the mass media and covered principally in conjunction with one of the primary stories outlined above, it was these subsidiary plots which in fact dealt with the main features of `positive images` from the perspective of the actors involved. The first concerned the mobilisation of the right in Haringey through petitions, marches and rallies during the summer of 1986.[12] The second examined competing interpretations of what the policy entailed and the various meetings and events at which conflicting positions were expressed.[13] The third dealt with the blockading of schools by the PRG in the autumn of 1986 and summer of 1987[14] and the forth story concerned the publication and release of Mirrors round the walls, Haringey's exposition of a positive lesbian and gay educational policy.[15]

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[12] For examples of coverage, see the Daily Telegraph, 20 August 1986; the Hornsey Journal, 29 August 1986.

[13] For examples of coverage, see the Sunday Telegraph, 14 September 1986; the London Standard, 1 October 1986; the Sunday Times, 9 November 1986.

[14] For examples of coverage, see the London Standard, 19 March 1987; the Daily Mirror, 15 October 1986; the Haringey Independent, 23 April 1987.

[15] For examples of press coverage, see the Hornsey Journal, 8 April 1988; the Daily Mail, 30 March 1988.

In this chapter I examine the media's portrayal of `positive images` and the struggle that surrounded it. I have argued so far that the mass media's presentation of homosexuality broadly reflected a conservative ideological consensus. Yet if this was so, to what extent were the press, radio and television able to shape attitudes and public opinion beyond simply confirming the views of existing opponents and critics? Were they, for example, able to have any impact on supporters' comprehension or interpretations of the policy?

In the first part of this chapter I examine the techniques adopted by the mass media to maintain and convey a discursive authority to different audiences. Subsequently, I go on to consider the relationship between the mass media and the parties involved in the struggle over `positive images`. Did a special relationship between the media and right exist? What was the effect of this on the mobilisation of forces and on the development of positive images? Finally, to what extent was such a relationship the result of political and ideological congruity or the product of other factors, in particular, the political environment and the requirements of newsworthiness?

B. TEXTUAL STRATEGIES IN THE MEDIA'S PORTRAYAL OF `POSITIVE IMAGES`.

1. Radio interviews.

As interest in Haringey council's lesbian and gay educational policy heightened in the early summer and autumn of 1986, several radio programmes chose to focus on the issue. Such shows were intended to present a balanced set of opinions, for example, the inclusion of a

Labour councillor as well as a member of an opposed pressure group. Nevertheless, the ideoiogical steer was visible from the start due to the very nature of the problematic. This was not the construction of sexuality, nor even how schools should deal with questions of sexual orientation, but the much more limited issue of `should homosexuality be taught in schools`. Below I consider two examples of radio interviews about `positive images`.

In the first, `The Way It Is`,[16] the guests were Martin Mallen, Conservative opposition leader from Ealing council, Michael Duffy, incoming president of the Secondary Head Teacher's Association, and Diana Minns, Labour member of Haringey council, and the only panellist publicly to support `positive images`. The presenter commenced the short programme by introducing the `deep concern` of Conservative councillors, MPs and "worried parents" and asked Cllr. Minns how it was possible to present homosexuality in a more positive light "without encouraging it". After she had briefly replied, he then asked Cllr. Mallen to state his objections, which the presenter emphasised by reiterating the fact that the policy applied to "quite young children".

In contrast to the interrogative stance adopted with Cllr. Minns, the presenter went on to clarify the opposition's position by confirming that they were not hysterical; that is, that their fears were reasonably held and they were not reacting inappropriately. The programme concluded with another short statement by Cllr. Minns, preceded by the presenter's comment, "such negative attitudes about the

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[16] Capital Radio, 21 August 1986.

council's approach don't move Haringey Councillor Minns and she's got this message for the critics".

Thus, in this 4 1/2 minute radio item, although opposing views were given approximately equal airtime and Cllr. Minns was given the final word, the depiction of the issue by the interviewer was clearly more favourable to opponents of `positive images`. Their arguments were presented as those of `parents genuinely worried`, whilst the Haringey representative was constructed as rigid and `ideological`.[17]

In a longer, twenty-seven minute item on the Gloria Hunniford Programme,[18] a similar ideological steerage was apparent in an exchange of views between a representative of the PRG and one from the Gay Christian Movement. In part this was again the result of the interview structure, the advocate of `positive images` being placed on the defensive while the opponent was assisted in presenting his point of view. Hunniford's comments, questions and the issues she emphasised affirmed a dominant sexual politics: that the policy affected parents; that the primary issue was the age of the children concerned - young children would be confused; that it put pressure on teachers at a time of cutbacks; that they were being <u>forced</u> to teach pro-gay material; and that children emerged exclusively out of heterosexual unions. Attempts by the Gay Christian Movement representative to challenge the assumptions implicit in Hunniford's representation of the issues were

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[17] By this I mean perceived as making conscious attempts to change status quo attitudes and beliefs through the introduction of new policies. In chapter seven I define this strategy as `instrumental ideology`.

[18] BBC Radio 2, 12 February 1987.

undermined through interruptions by Hunniford and the other interviewee, her sudden topic changes, the use of callers to shift attention and to back up Hunniford's point of view, and her reiterated insistence that certain issues were crucial.

2. Press reports.

How did the play of textual strategies occur within the press' portrayal of `positive images`? Here I focus on the media coverage of the Jenny lives with Eric and Martin episode. Whilst newspapers covering the item were less concerned to present a balance of views than were broadcasting programmes, the need for coverage to appear credible was equally strong. For this reason the vast majority of the items took the form of news stories rather than editorials, since the latter function more explicitly as interpretive directives, that is the paper's opinion on an issue. Moreover, the narrative or story format facilitated the use of elaboration, making the tale more interesting and memorable. This enhanced rather than detracted from its ability to shape and confirm public attitudes.

During the period 16 to 22 September 1986, over twenty-four items on Jenny lives with Eric and Martin appeared in the nation's press. The main plot concerned the apparent widespread availability of the book and, by implication, its curricular use in schools. Since the book was seen as symptomatic of general changes wrought by left-wing local authorities, a sub-plot became the simultaneous removal of other books from schools and libraries, such as Biggles and Enid Blyton novels, on the grounds of racism and sexism. The key theme was the danger of

revolutionary transformation, the forced eradication of traditional forms of pleasure enjoyed by generations and their substitution by joyless propaganda. Since similar comments have often been made about socialist states, this theme had a resonance. Local authorities were construed as either consciously introducing Soviet-type rule or, in the alternative, their policies were the result of external direction, emanating from international revolutionaries.[19]

Such a plot and theme were repeatedly contested by the local authorities in question which stressed the highly limited availability of Jenny lives with Eric and Martin. Nevertheless, through the media's use of carefully woven textual strategies, the views of local authorities were marginalised and the story maintained its credibility. I now go on to discuss these various techniques.

(i) Headlines and text.

Studies have shown that people reading newspapers absorb headlines and opening sentences to a much greater extent than comments at the end of a story or press item (A. Young, 1990:121). This kind of knowledge is operationalised by journalists and editors and was widely deployed in the tabloid press' coverage of Jenny lives with Eric and Martin. First, nearly all items opened with a statement of opponent's fears; only towards the end of articles, if at all, was the position of the local authorities revealed. Second, sensationalistic headlines were used even where these were contradicted or at least modified by the

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[19] This is ironic in the context of the USSR's traditionally negative response to homosexuality.

story below. Such headlines during this period included: `"Don't ban Biggles", Minister tells Public Library`;[20] `Hit Squad of Parents to Burn Gay Schoolbook`;[21] `Parents Say "Withdraw that Book"`;[22] `Gay Book is on Loan to Children`;[23] and `Baker acts over Gay Schoolbook`[24].

Headlines such as these reveal several textual strategies. First, word association: Jenny lives with Eric and Martin was never conceived of as a school book.[25] Although written for young people, it was not intended as part of a structured curriculum and indeed sympathetic educationalists have rejected it for use on that basis. Nevertheless, in both headlines and the items that followed, the book was consistently referred to in that way. Why? One possible explanation is that for the majority of people reading the story, who had never come into contact with the book itself, the notion of `schoolbook` conjured up images of instruction and mass readership by young people. According to the Daily Telegraph, 17 September 1986, almost 3,000 copies had been sold. Thus the implication was of books being widely purchased for

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[20] The Daily Telegraph, 19 September, 1986.

[21] The Daily Mail, 17 September, 1986.

[22] The Haringey Independent, 18 September, 1986.

[23] The Standard, 16 September, 1986.
The nominalisation of `on loan` avoids the question - loaned by who? - as well as the time period within which the action was supposed to take place. The passive tense used emphasises the object - the `gay book`; for discussion of these textual strategies see G. Kress (1983:128-9).

[24] The Daily Mail, 16 September 1986.

[25] Personal knowledge.

school use.[26] This raised a further question. What was the curricular framework that precipitated the need for such a book? The answer: promoting homosexuality.

The use of curt, abrupt headlines to create a sense of urgency was a further textual strategy deployed by much of the press. This need for immediate action was accentuated by the active subjects within the headline syntax - predominantly parents and ministers - followed by transitive verbs.[27] The subtext of such a strategy was that normally quiet, highly respected figures had been so angered by the book's availability that they were taking unprecedented action.

Other means were also used to emphasise the extent cf parental anger at the amount of money being spent on lesbian and gay initiatives when insufficient funds were available for other projects. The Haringey Advertiser, 17 July 1986, quoted `mothers` as `furious that a reported £250,000 is being made available to schools to implement the equal opportunities policies`. This excerpt demonstrates several journalistic devices. First, the generic term `mothers`, does not specify which are angry, or how many. Instead it suggests that all mothers are or would be angry since the policy is by implication a direct attack on their parental role. Second, the information, whilst clear in its thrust that considerable sums were being spent on lesbian and gay educational

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[26] The more mundane reality is that the book was principally bought by sympathetic adults, and from September 1986 onwards by its opponents. In an interview with the Gay Men's Press who published the book, the Guardian, 18 September 1986, the publishers stated that as a result of the negative publicity they had received the book was now out of print.

[27] See G. Kress (1983:127).

policies, is actually very vague. Where does the figure come from? Who told the parents? Did the journalist suggest the amount to the women in order to get a reaction? If the figure came from the women, then the journalist and newspaper can convey it as factual information without taking responsibility for its accuracy; they were simply reporting details held by others.[28]

As well as conveying anger, press stories and headings also used textual strategies to evoke the degree of power possessed by the book's opponents. This was however an ambivalent issue. On the one hand, the press were concerned to present the local authorities in question as authoritarian, bent on indoctrinating their borough's youths. At the same time, it was important to portray opponents as able to resist; otherwise, people reading the articles might sink into apathy - opposed to a policy it appeared they could do nothing about. Indeed, I would argue one of the implicit objectives of many of the articles was to mobilise opposition to municipal gay initiatives and to left-wing councils in general.[29] In one Daily Mail article, 17 September 1986, Pat Headd from the PRG actually states that the reason her organisation mobilised locally in Haringey against Jenny lives with Eric and Martin was because of the press' coverage of Baker's angry comments:

> "The Minister's message in your own paper was a sign for us to act...and use our own initiative."

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[28] See J. Dickey (1987:82) on the deployment of letters pages to express attitudes for which the newspaper does not have to take editorial responsibility.

[29] For example, George Gale, the Daily Mirror, 9 July 1986.

(ii) Photographs.

Alongside or just underneath the headings of many of the stories were photographs. Most depicted Kenneth Baker, the story's central figure, looking alternately angry, upset or masterful. Others reproduced the photographs from Jenny lives with Eric and Martin.

One photograph in particular stands out. Although only a few of the papers chose actually to print it, nearly every article alluded to it. The Haringey Advertiser even went so far as to reduce the entire text of the book to this one visual image which `shows two gay men naked in bed together`,[30] and sitting between them, the five year old daughter of one of them.[31] This picture became central to the debate over Jenny lives with Eric and Martin, symbolising as it did opponents' fears. The photographic image equated homosexuals with sex; that was the implication drawn from two men lying (semi-)naked in bed together. Furthermore, it showed a child in close proximity to such sexuality; `youthful innocence` juxtaposed with corruption. The book was thus all the more dangerous because it depicted the experience as innocent fun. The child would develop a tolerance or even worse a liking for deviant sexual activity. The image also resonated for women and others with its potential connotations of child sexual abuse.[32]

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[30] The Haringey Advertiser, 25 September 1986.

[31] See the Daily Telegraph, 17 September 1986, the book shows `a girl of five sitting in bed with her father and his homosexual lover`.

[32] To what extent were the fears incoherent since the men were clearly depicted as gay and therefore highly unlikely to see a young girl as a sexual object? Whilst literal concerns were inconsistent with the information presented, on a symbolic level what was being articulated was male sexuality towards young girls. For further discussion of this point, see chapter seven. Many feminists have been

A similar set of associations are manifested in the illustrations accompanying an article on `positive images` by Paul Johnson of the Daily Telegraph.[33] The piece focuses on what is described as `an `official` sex industry...at work in the classroom...poisoning the minds of children`. On the article's first page, an illustration of the cover of Jenny lives with Eric and Martin is placed adjacent to one of two men with National Union of Teachers (NUT) placards supporting `Haringey's `positive images` policy for homosexuals`. The proximity of these two images suggests that Jenny, laughing, innocent, young and blond[34] is in danger, despite (and because of) her obliviousness to the threat posed by these grim-looking, dark haired men. The connotations here are not only of child abuse and homosexual proselytism but also of children being used as instruments in a militant cause. The two men carrying placards with political slogans are teachers. They are the `enemy within`, able to actually implement `positive images` in the classroom. Unlike other texts which have distanced teachers from the policies of authorities such as Haringey and ILEA, this image links teachers and authority together.[35]

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opposed to the book for this reason, perceiving the image as unnecessarily provocative and offensive to survivors of sexual abuse.

[33] The Daily Telegraph, 6 October 1986.

[34] There is a racist implication in the signification, which equates blond with innocence and dark with sinister.

[35] Compare this to the speech of Hugh Rossi, MP for Hornsey & Wood Green, House of Commons, col.1085, 21 October 1986, in which he states that teachers, approached by the PRG to meet, said they could not discuss `positive images` since Haringey council was their employer. The implication is that teachers were opposed to `positive images`, but scared of the personal repercussions of `speaking out`.

On the following page of Johnson's article, the juxtaposed photograph and drawing continue the theme of the previous page. The drawing is of the cover of the book, The playbook for kids about sex. Adjacent is a photograph of people struggling outside Haringey's civic centre. The caption accompanying the two images reads, `last week's confrontation between North London parents and activists favouring the new sex education orthodoxy. Right: textbook for beginners`.[36]

Despite the ironic tone of the comment, the suggestion, once again, is that what might seem initially innocent, a book with funny pictures of parts of the body, leads people on to less harmless behaviour. According to Jill Knight MP,[37] The playbook for kids about sex uses pictures that appeal to a child. Thus it is the most frightening piece of propaganda. Moreover, if the book is being promoted by `violent` radicals[38] - Socialist Workers Party (SWP) placards are just visible in the photograph - then it must be even more politically charged than it might otherwise appear. References to the SWP's supposed involvement in defending `positive images` were included in several papers. For example, the Herald, 9 October 1986, refers to: `200 supporters of council policy including local gay and lesbian groups and the SWP` and the London Standard, 1 October 1986 states `parents were met by an equal number of gay and lesbian and SWP activists'. A similar point is

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[36] See S. Hall (1973:178) who suggests that captions tell us in words how the subject's expression ought to be read.

[37] House of Commons, col.999, 8 May 1987.

[38] See S. Hall (1973b:184); `The most salient news value is violence...events are augmented in value by the attribution of violence`.

made by Baroness Cox, undoubtedly influenced or informed by the national and possibly local press.[39]

> "...it is necessary to understand that there is a political dimension which we cannot ignore and that is the involvement of the hard line far left in local government and also in local politicised branches of the National Union of Teachers.
>
> At the council meetings where there has been such violence, there is a forest of banners including those of the revolutionary (sic) Communist Party, the Socialist Workers Party and in Haringey the Haringey Branch of the National Union of Teachers."

C. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE MEDIA AND ACTORS IN THE STRUGGLE OVER `POSITIVE IMAGES`.

1. Access to the media.

Having discussed some aspects of the media's approach to `positive images`, I now wish to turn to a related issue: the way in which the media was utilised by participants in their struggle over the policy. This is an issue that concerns both the tactics and goals of contestants as well as the media's willingness to grant them access.[40]

Between different participants in the struggle, utilisation of the mass media varied. For the council, press and broadcasting were something of a Trojan horse, untrustworthy, but impossible to ignore. Few council spokespeople thought their comments would be sympathetically received and fairly reproduced outside the small progressive press. But the fear was not only of distortion. Haringey

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[39] House of Lords, col. 322, 18 December 1986. See also Media Research Group (1987:5).

[40] See J. S. Foote (1990) for a discussion of differential political access to the media in the USA.

council leadership and senior officers lacked confidence in how the policies, even if `accurately` conveyed, would be received by the general public. They also feared how such information might be used by the right.[41] As a result, the response tended to be defensive; emphasis was placed on protecting the council from attack rather than on effectively conveying the reasons why a policy such as `positive images` was deemed necessary (see chapter five). Indeed anxiety as to what might be said by inexperienced and `foolhardy` council members precipitated an instruction that Haringey councillors were not to issue press releases independently of the council leadership. Instead, all press contact was to be through the official press office and members' comments to be made via the deputy leader.[42]

Nevertheless, despite misgivings, few requests by the mass media for information and interviewees were actually turned down, (with the exception of the Murdock press which the council was boycotting). To reject requests out of hand, it was felt, would give a completely free hand to opponents' interpretations of the policy. Furthermore, despite councillors' reservations, the mass media was seen as the only way of reaching a wide public.

But what about Haringey council's own literature on `positive images`? Attitudes towards council leaflets and those produced by

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[41] This was also apparent in the defensive tone of council leaflets, whose production and distribution was also delayed for similar reasons.

[42] Memo, 21 August 1986, from the press and publicity unit to Alan Milstead, assistant to chair of education. The memo also states that articles appearing in the press were suggesting the council was divided over lesbian and gay issues in education.

community groups varied. For some councillors, officers, and community activists they were imperative as a means of `putting the record straight`, maintaining control and as a weapon in the struggle. For others, as I discussed in chapter five, their limited availability beyond Haringey meant they were peripheral to any conflict taking place at national level. In addition, council literature was arguably less influential than mass media texts due both to the council's position as a partisan player within the struggle and as a result of the language and discourse it deployed. The council could not compete for effectivity with the non-bureaucratic language, aural and visual imagery of the mass media.

To what extent does this point challenge the notion of local government as a producer of authoritative discourse? I return to this question in chapter seven. It does however raise interesting questions as to the kinds of discourses and ideologies local government can effectively transmit. It also raises the question of whether local government can more productively convey meanings and knowledge through its conventional practices, such as service provision and economic development, than through explicitly ideological texts.

Haringey council's defensive strategy contrasted with the right's pro-active, assertive use of the media. The latter's tactics need to be seen within the context of the right's objectives which went beyond the mere halting of `positive images` in Haringey. Their aims encompassed the development of a populist movement in favour of a new right hegemony and the undermining of the Labour Party's electoral chances nationally. Haringey, identified as a prototype of left-wing

government, was thus essential to their project as was the opportunity `positive images` provided to communicate a Conservative sexual politics.[43]

As a result, the PRG structured their campaign with a view to what would attract the greatest media interest: burning copies of Jenny lives with Eric and Martin; the vicar's timely fast to death; the claimed assault on a pregnant member of the PRG attending a lesbian and gay youth day;[44] `parents` picketing outside school gates to persuade other parents to keep their children at home in protest. Dramatic, entertaining, ludicrous, each of these events became, as I have said, the focus for a batch of media stories and indeed comprised the vast majority of media coverage of `positive images`.

The right also had the advantage of key public figures. Church leaders, government ministers, conservative academics such as Roger Scrutton, all added their names to protests against the policy.[45] The ability to deploy well known and influential actors gave the right a number of advantages. As Young (1990:ch. 6) discusses, the social, economic and political connections between elite figures and

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[43] This would have been much harder and less effective without such policies providing a context for their arguments.

[44] The lesbian and gay youth day provided excellent copy. It included the showing of a video made by some young women called provocatively `How to be a lesbian`, while the premises hired were used the rest of the week as a youth centre for young people with disabilities.

Press items made the most of these details as the following headlines demonstrate: `Pregnant woman punched`, the Times, 17 March 1987; `Handicapped girls `saw lesbian film``, the Daily Mail, 3 April 1987; ``Mad bouncer killed my baby``, the Voice, 29 April 1987.

[45] R. Scrutton, the Times, 11 November 1986; see also Auberon Waugh, the Spectator, 10 May 1986.

controllers of the media assisted the former in obtaining access to the media, in particular to the press, so did a congruence of ideological and political goals and perspectives.[46]

However, media bias cannot be entirely explained by the political complexion of the newspapers in question. It also emerged as a result of the congruence that existed between the right's strategy and media interest. Unlike the left who focused on policy goals and objectives, the right emphasised the characters in their narrative - the fasting priest, angry minister and assaulted pregnant woman - whose actions took place against a backdrop of worried `mothers` and `parents`. This is not to say that the right did not also talk about issues. As I discussed in chapter five, they certainly did. However, such issues were always articulated by well-defined characters; and it was the characters rather than the issues that were placed under the spotlight. Media researchers have suggested this kind of strategy was more compatible with the requirements of newsworthiness as currently understood by the mass media, which perceived people as more newsworthy than underlying forms of discrimination and the mechanisms adopted to tackle them.[47]

Thus the right's success in shaping media coverage was partly the result of its own strategising, but also, to a large degree, the

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[46] See for example, the Guardian, 29 January 1992, `Tories prime Mail for shots at Labour`.

[47] See J. Galtung and M. Rose (1973:63-70); S. Hall (1973b:86-91, 1973a:178-82); G. Murdock (1973:163, 168-9).

consequence of media values and interest[48] which led journalists to choose to focus on the right's point of view. The extent of the skewing of access in the press coverage of Jenny lives with Eric and Martin, can be illustrated by the Daily Mail. In their four items on the topic,[49] quotations were only included from Kenneth Baker and the PRG This trend was replicated throughout the tabloids, the local papers,[50] and the right-wing press generally.

Yet the issue of media access does not simply relate to the proportion of coverage allotted to supporters or opponents of `positive images`. It also encompasses the question of who was allowed to represent either side. In the case of opponents of the policy, access to the media tended to be available to a wide variety of spokespeople, including politicians, clerics, pressure groups and `parents`. However, this was not the case for supporters of the policy.

Pressure groups on the left were rarely given the opportunity to present their views.[51] Instead, spokespeople for Haringey's educational

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[48] There was also a bandwagon effect in operation. This can be seen by contrasting the coverage of `positive images` with that of S. 28, Local Government Act 1988. In the case of the latter as more and more sections of the liberal middle-class community came out against the legislation so did the liberal press which had remained silent over `positive images`.

[49] See The Daily Mail, 16, 17, 18 and 22 September 1986.

[50] Access to the local press was an important factor since many of the national papers picked up local stories, often repeating them without any of their own investigation.

[51] Interviews with Linda Arch and Vince Gillespie. Savi Hensman when interviewed, however, disagreed, arguing Positive Images and Haringey Black Action in particular received coverage in local press, Black press and by broadcasting and that "coverage was more balanced than it could have been".

policy tended to be councillors or officers. In a survey of about two-thirds of the press-cuttings on `positive images` from the summer of 1986 until the end of 1987, unidentified council spokespersons were most frequently referred to as the source of information or quotations,[52] senior councillors were quoted a handful of times, Positive Images (PI) once and Haringey Black Action (HBA) once. One explanation for such limited exposure was journalists' decisions not to interview left-wing, grass-roots activists. This was for several reasons. First, the policy was seen as belonging to Haringey council - an important discursive plank in the right's strategy. Second, PI and HBA were seen as supporting an unpopular, potentially dangerous cause; and, third, their very identity as gay, Black and radical was perceived by the media as affording them no legitimacy or credibility as spokespeople.[53]

A second explanation for the omission was that although interviews took place journalists or editors chose not to use them because grass-roots groups refused to say what the press wanted to hear. PI and HBA included a number of experienced activists well used to dealing with the media. Thus, it is likely journalists did not get statements from them that would have assisted the mobilisation of people against the policy. Also, one might conjecture, the media feared that reporting PI and HBA's comments could win people over to the policy. For it is quite likely that the groups' spokespeople were more able effectively to convey the purpose and objectives of the `positive images` policy than apprehensive politicians were capable of doing.

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[52] Usually the press office.

[53] See generally K. Withall (1990:55).

However, PI and HBA's exclusion was not solely the result of media selectivity. When journalists and broadcasting researchers wanted an interviewee they tended to approach the council, usually the press office, for possible names. Whilst the local Conservative Association, when approached, would suggest that journalists contact the PRG, the council tended to be more reluctant in referring journalists and researchers to PI and HBA. This might have been because they feared what such groups might say and wished to maintain greater control over statements to the media. Equally important, however, was the tenuous nature of the links between most officers and members, and HBA and PI. Moreover, whereas the Conservative Party recognised the importance of the PRG maintaining a high profile, the council saw supportive pressure groups as having at best an ancillary function since they saw themselves as possessing sufficient legitimacy to effectively promote their policies.[54]

This was the paradox councillors and officers worked within. On the one hand, they believed their policies would not be adequately conveyed by the mass media; on the other, they did not consider other actors to be any more effective. Whilst, it is extremely unlikely PI or HBA would have received a better reception from much of the press and broadcasting stations, at the same time, by using them in this way,

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[54] In referring to `the council` in this way, I mean its corporate voice, that predominantly unarticulated consensus between senior management and councillors, which took public shape if at all, in the directives from the press office. This corporate voice could and frequently did differ from the views -expressed and otherwise - of the council's leadership. However in as much as the leadership did not challenge or contest certain practices they gave their tacit support or acquiescence to their continuance.

part of the communication problem would have been addressed. This was the predicament Labour councillors and officers did not recognise. The difficulty that arose from them as spokespeople, arguing for a policy that was being attacked as authoritarian and unrepresentative of the community's wishes.

2. Deployment of media texts in the struggle over `positive images`.

I have discussed above how the mass media was used by right-wing participants in the struggle over `positive images` to publicise particular `facts` and opinions and the differential access granted by the press and broadcasting to particular actors and perspectives. I now examine the use made of already produced media texts by participants in the struggle.

Since most such texts were hostile to `positive images`, the use supporters of the policy could make of them was clearly limited. Perhaps their principal value for the left was in demonstrating the degree of hostility that existed, to keep supporters abreast of their opponents' plans, and to rally people around the threat posed by the right. At some level though, one could argue that these texts were empowering. Their focus on the frightful misdeeds happening in Haringey in some ways strengthened people's resolve more than the stock council denials, and more than left-wing actors' own perceptions of the reality of the situation.

A few stories and media items were also sufficiently open textured to be read as self-parody and hence found humorous (J. Fiske,

1989:70). Despite the levels of hostility and resentment such texts represented, they did provide a source of shared amusement for supporters of the policy at what was perceived as the excesses and distortions to which the mass media would go. Moreover, the explicit lack of any neutrality or balance within the tabloid press was also, to an extent, politically comforting. Articles in the Daily Mail and Daily Express made clear that a conflict existed, that a struggle was taking place between opposing values and lifestyles. In a sense this was more satisfying to left-wing actors than the stony-faced silence of the broadsheet press who treated the issue as insignificant, rejected any notion of essential contestability, and affirmed council claims that very little was actually taking place.[55]

Beyond this, media attention had a negative effect on proponents of `positive images` since it pressurised Haringey council to contain its work in order to avoid adverse coverage. Steve King, deputy leader at that time, argues that up until the 1987 general election, the council was always on the defensive as a result of media interest. Consequently, according to King, what emerged was a contradictory situation. On the one hand, council spokespeople repeatedly informed the press that no withdrawal was taking place from manifesto commitments, at the same time, immense public and media pressures meant little developmental work on `positive images` could be carried out.[56]

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[55] The left-wing actors described included those who perceived sexual politics as essentially about power and conflict and others who possessed such a politics on other issues, for example, economic class, but who were, nevertheless, highly involved in campaigning for `positive images`.

[56] Interview with Steve King.

In contrast, for opponents of `positive images`, news stories played a vital part in popularising and giving credibility to their position. First, they provided a constant reiteration of conservative sexual politics. Second, they generated stories that could be used with authority despite the fact that many came from right wing sources in the first place. As a result of a general acceptance of the media's primary, fact-finding role, press stories were deemed to possess a truth-value unmatched by the more explicitly partisan constructions of right-wing groups. A story was more credible if its source was a newspaper, particularly one of the quality press, than if it came directly from the Conservative Party.[57]

Mass media narratives also made available a common currency from which opposition to `positive images` could be constructed. First, because as stories they were memorable. The announcement of Jill Knight MP,[58] for example, that Haringey lesbian and gay unit had made a video on how to be a lesbian in 35 minutes, shown to `mentally handicapped girls` was a powerful rhetorical gesture, that extrapolated aspects of the event in order to turn it into something unintended by the council bureaucracy. Second, such stories, by being nationally known, provided shared points of reference. Even Labour MPs appeared to uncritically accept the reality of `loony` left-wing councils as propounded by the

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[57] The church also had greater credibility as a neutral body than the Conservative Party in this respect.

[58] House of Commons, col.999, 8 May 1987.

nation's press.[59] Labour peer, Lord Graham, stated in the House of Lords,

> "I don't deny what the booklets pleaded in aid in debate are said to contain and I abhor it as well as anyone else".[60]

The significant level of media coverage also assisted the right by exaggerating the degree of support they possessed. According to Lord Halsbury:

> "...there is overwhelming support from all over the country and a very good press."[61]

So much attention by the media, so many quotations from outraged parents and others must mean considerable and widespread opposition.[62] Just as the media used the comments of right-wing politicians to legitimise otherwise dubious statements of intention and fact, and to avoid their own responsibility for such statements (G. Murdock, 1973:168), so politicians used the media for similar purposes. An illustration of this is Lady Saltoun of Abernethy's comment in the House of Lords:

> "...did the noble Baroness see the report in The Times of 17th March about the pregnant woman who went to a meeting of gays and

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[59] See the Guardian, 15 March 1988:- The political centre accepted without question Conservative claims that homosexuality was being promoted by Labour councils. Until a change of heart on the Labour front bench, with the advent of S. 28, few mainstream politicians were prepared to argue that presenting positive images in schools was not promoting homosexuality but tolerance.

[60] House of Lords, col. 327, 18 December 1986.

[61] House of Lords, col. 311, 18 December 1986.

[62] Although Ron Bell, former Conservative councillor on Haringey council and spokesperson for lesbian and gay issues, claimed, when interviewed, that the PRG was a very small group.

> lesbians in Haringey and was sworn at, punched in the stomach and thrown to the ground?'[63]

In this way a self-affirming cycle of information and opinion was constituted, beneficial to the right and the media alike.

Yet, in this cycle of knowledge gathering, little information about lesbian and gay educational policies was conveyed outside of the series of isolated incidents which tended to possess only a tangential connection to the central issue. As an article in the Guardian stated,[64] right-wing politicians such as Jill Knight evaded demands for `hard` evidence that homosexuality and homosexual literature was being `pushed` in schools. This is not surprising since, as the local authorities in question constantly reiterated, widespread implementation of lesbian and gay educational initiatives did not exist. What though was surprising was the right's ability to engineer a moral panic on the basis of a few isolated incidents.[65]

To do this, the right relied on the metaphorical value of the stories it told. News items on gay books, the assault on a PRG member, and the bonfire to burn Jenny lives with Eric and Martin, all stood for something else, larger and more coherent than these fragmented events.

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[63] House of Lords, col.572, 1 April 1987.

[64] The Guardian, 15 March 1988.

[65] One such incident was the girl described by Sally Oppenheim, MP, House of Commons, col. 1070, 21 October 1986, who was given Kate Millett's Sexual politics to read by her teacher and as a consequence had a nervous breakdown.
The extent of the moral panic is difficult to determine. Apart from claims by the mass media and the policy's opponents, the only other evidence is possible electoral shifts in the 1987 general elections and statistical data on changing attitudes towards homosexuality; see for example R. Jowell et al. (eds) (1988/9).

By adopting this strategy, the right were able to focus attention on the underlying problem such incidents revealed and thus argue the need for widespread regulation. Lady Saltoun of Abernethy stated in the House of Lords,

> "...as a mother and grandmother I am appalled by `The Playbook for Kids about Sex'. Corrupting children is one of the worst crimes anyone can commit...This is a David of a Bill to kill a Goliath of an evil."[66]

The adoption of this approach by the right forced the left into a corner, arguing over the details - how accessible was Jenny lives with Eric and Martin to children?[67] Was Ms. Rosemary Johnson really assaulted? - rather than the wider issues.[68] In this way, they reinforced the right's argument that such policies were widespread, although the particular details concerning certain resources or events may have been in doubt.

D. CONCLUSION.

The mass media - press and broadcasting - provided extensive coverage of Haringey council's policy of `positive images` but from within a narrow ideological spectrum. Such coverage rarely focused on the reasons for the initiative nor on what Haringey was trying to achieve. Rather, the media's orientation, with few exceptions, was towards articulating and conveying the views of the policy's opponents,

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[66] House of Lords, col.317, 18 December 1986.

[67] See Giles Radice, MP, Labour Shadow Spokesperson on Education, House of Commons, col.1060, 21 October 1986; "...I don't believe `Jenny Lives with Eric and Martin` should be for general use and nor does ILEA".

[68] Media Research Group (1987:7).

thereby placing the council and its supporters on the defensive. The textual strategies adopted by the media varied between mediums and within the press between papers. Yet, although broadcasting and the `quality` press appeared to offer a range of views with potentially less closure, or, alternatively, an interpretation closer towards the middle of the ideological spectrum, a preferred meaning still existed, arguably conveyed more effectively by being less explicit.

The tabloid and conservative press, on the other hand, presented fairly closed, partisan readings of the policy and the struggle surrounding it. Although, it is possible that their use of humour enabled their texts to be more polysemic (G. Philo, 1990), nevertheless, they were still concerned to achieve the greatest credibility possible. For this reason they chose to use stories rather than editorials in their coverage, thus benefitting from their greater subtlety as ideological texts as well as from their potentially sensational, memorable quality, more lurid and exciting than the stock council denials with which they were met. In addition, the mass media's use of fear, aggression and ridicule in their coverage, whilst seemingly contradictory, enabled them, at the same time, to widen their appeal.

In the second part of this chapter I discussed how the right in comparison to the council shaped their campaign to obtain the greatest media effect. Nevertheless, irrespective of such tactics, for structural and other reasons, access to the mass media, in particular to the tabloid press, which gave `positive images` the most extensive coverage, was largely skewed in the right's favour. Left-wing pressure

groups in contrast received almost no coverage. Finally, I considered how media stories were used by both sides; how to the left they were of limited value except to the extent they demonstrated the range of forces mobilising against the policy. For the right, however, they were of central importance in popularising and giving credibility to their campaign.

Thus the media became an additional external factor operating against the development of lesbian and gay municipal policies. This process of opposition and containment was achieved both directly and indirectly. First, directly, by (i) forcing Haringey council onto the defensive, causing it to structure its policy development in ways that would elicit the least media coverage, and (ii) shaping the way `positive images` was comprehended by the general public, thereby undermining one of the policy's chief objectives: to change people's attitudes.

In this thesis I have not undertaken research into the general public's perceptions of homosexuality and `positive images`, nor whether such perceptions differed over the period of struggle, nor have I compared attitudes in Haringey to those existing elsewhere. Nevertheless, I would argue that people interpreted media stories about `positive images` in diverse ways, such readings being shaped by people's own attitudes and beliefs, in conjunction with information acquired from a variety of sources. Yet despite such heterogeneity, the media's portrayal of the policy did make an impact. Its account of what was happening, of the `facts`, undoubtedly had an effect, even on

people used to reading against the grain of mass media texts.[69] Whether people became as a result less sympathetic to local government, lesbians and gay men, and progressive education or simply believed Haringey was implementing a radical set of policies needs further research. However, it seems likely that the council's ostensible objective of reducing bigotry was not assisted by the mass media's portrayal and that amongst people already unsympathetic to lesbians and gays, attitudes hardened.

The media also affected `positive images` indirectly. First, it helped to create an atmosphere within which legislation like the Local Government Act 1988, S. 28, was more acceptable. Second, it possibly provoked some people who would not otherwise have done so to vote Conservative in the 1987 general election. Third, it gave publicity to right-wing ideas and their proponents thereby helping to strengthen the mobilisation of the right and the alliances formed between different reactionary groupings.

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[69] See R. Entman (1989) on the debate over whether the media's role in agenda-setting, defining the issues, influencing people's perceptions of the problems, and their resolution can be equated with shaping what people think.

CHAPTER SEVEN.

SEXUAL POLITICS AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT.

A. INTRODUCTION.

In this thesis I have explored the development of municipal lesbian and gay initiatives from 1979 to 1987. I began by recounting how and why lesbian and gay issues emerged onto the local government agenda in the early 1980s. I then went on, in chapter three, to discuss developments in some detail in three local authorities - LB Islington, Nottingham City Council and LB Camden. My focus there was on the trajectory of development, the initial surge of interest which quickly became superseded by public controversy, municipal anxiety, community demoralisation and, in some cases, the eventual dissolution of lesbian and gay municipal structures.

In chapter four, I went on to look specifically at the policy making/implementation process, to uncover the ways in which policies were watered down as they went through the process of being formulated and introduced. Finally, in chapters five and six, I explored the struggle over Haringey council's educational policy, `positive images`, examining what happened when internal processes of political containment broke down. In particular, I focused on the mobilisation of forces against `positive images`, the means of power at their disposal, and the role played by the media. In conclusion, I evaluated the ability of opponents to undermine and destroy municipal gay initiatives.

Three key themes have emerged from my project which I wish to examine further here: (1) the `mobilisation of bias` and suppression of more radical approaches to sexual politics; (2) the crisis in implementation; and (3) the generation of vigorous and hostile opposition, as exemplified in the opposition to `positive images`. To these three strands I wish to add a fourth: to what extent did lesbian and gay initiatives and structures survive into the 1990s? In addressing these issues, I hope to bring together the material examined in previous chapters, before going on in the conclusion of this thesis tentatively to explore means by which municipal activism might facilitate a more progressive sexual politics.

B. MUNICIPAL SEXUAL POLITICS AND `THE MOBILISATION OF BIAS`.

The `mobilisation of bias` is a term developed by Schattschneider (1960;71) to explain the way in which some issues are organised into the political process and others are organised out. It is a concept used by those arguing that the exercise of power does not have to involve visible, explicit conflict. Rather, power is exercised more effectively when conflicts are not even able to emerge, when certain interests, positions and perspectives are suppressed.[1] In chapters two to six of this thesis, I argued that a more progressive sexual politics existed amongst the actors involved in developing lesbian and gay work than was evident in the actual initiatives or policies constructed and implemented. Now I wish to take this position one step further, to suggest that the steer away from a more radical politics began <u>prior</u> to the mobilisation of bias; that is, certain approaches were not even

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[1] See also on non-decision making, M. Crenson (1971:179).

thought, or, if thought, immediately dismissed as inappropriate within the setting of local government. Why was this so?

One possible answer might point to the political opinions of the actors involved. But in the case of lesbian and gay specialist officers, many had been, and some remained, active outside local government advocating political options they would not have contemplated proposing within it. A second answer is that they remained silent because they knew certain initiatives would be deemed unacceptable or lead to the mobilisation of a powerful opposition. A third is that lesbian and gay activists themselves, consciously and subconsciously, believed certain approaches were inappropriate for local government.

In the discussion that follows I consider these last two possibilities, examining the relationship between ideology and local government as a way of trying to understand why certain ideological approaches to homosexuality were deemed both unacceptable and illegitimate within the arena of local government. Broadly, my argument is that the ideological parameters of the local state - that is, the meanings that can be conveyed within it - possess a specificity that is distinguishable from the ideological terrain of community or grass-roots organisations. The implications of this I return to in my conclusion.

1. The ideological terrain of local government.

In my exploration of this issue, I have found four concepts to be useful. They are `dominant ideology`, `oppositional ideology`, `structural ideology` and `instrumental ideology`. My objective in using them is to address the issues raised above, and, in addition, to provide a model of ideology which integrates neo-marxist and more pluralist approaches. None of these terms should be perceived however as fixed, quantifiable categories. Rather, they are relative concepts, locations on a continuum of meaning. Let me set out what I mean by each of these terms.

By `dominant ideology` I refer to those networks of meaning which are both generally accepted and act to legitimise and perpetuate existing relations of power (M. Barrett, 1991:29-30).[2] Throughout this thesis, I have stressed that my analysis of ideology proceeds from a comprehension of power as multiple and oppression as diverse, involving relations of race, economic class, gender, disability and residency amongst others. From this perspective - a kind of working relationship between neo-marxism, feminism and post-structuralism - there is no <u>one</u> dominant set of meanings issuing from one dominant relation of power. Instead dominant meanings are contradictory and inconsistent. For example, to take a well-recited conundrum of socialist feminism: is

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[2] Whether meanings actually legitimise or sustain particular social relations is a highly contested issue. See generally on dominant ideology, T. Eagleton (1991:5, 18-21). For a useful explanation of ideology as systems of representation materialised in practices see S. Hall (1985:104).

Within my definition of dominant ideology, I exclude ideologies that appear to justify and maintain the status quo but are <u>not</u> hegemonic, that is, do not command widespread support, for example the belief that women are significantly inferior intellectually to men.

women's place the home or the workplace? The tension between the two possibilities offered reveals the potential inconsistencies between patriarchal and capitalist meanings. However, to see these as separate systems ignores the ways in which ideology and social practice condense different relations of power. Thus, although there are contradictions and inconsistencies within dominant ideology, the articulation of different power relations nevertheless tends to produce `coherent` dominant images such as, the butch, white, upper-class lesbian, or the masculine, working-class, gay man.

The second term `oppositional ideology` is used to refer to frameworks of meaning which challenge, negate or undermine the maintenance of current (unequal) social relations. They may function (counter-) hegemonically, that is, have gained broad consent, but are more likely, by their very nature as oppositional to the status quo, to lack general acceptability.

The third term, `structural ideology`, comes out of a neo-marxist, structuralist trajectory which depicts ideology as a system or level that impacts upon people. Althusser and others, who have worked within this framework, refer to the process of subjects being `hailed` or `interpellated`.[3] By this is meant that a reified (or deified) ideology calls to people, who, in recognising themselves as being `hailed`, thereby become both subjects of, and subjected to, the meanings ideology constructs.

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[3] See L. Althusser (1971). For a useful discussion of Althusser's approach to ideology and the meaning of `hailed` and `interpellation`, see S. Hall (1985:102, 109). See also D. MacDonnell (1986:ch. 2); C. Mouffe (1981:231).

Loosely based on this approach, I use the term `structural ideology` to refer to those meanings generally perceived as non-ideological or non-political; that is, those meanings taken as common-sense, that refer to `the way things are`.[4] Thus, structural ideology can be detached from its neo-marxist origins to function within an analysis of power as relational and dispersed. Whilst structural ideology encompasses dominant ideological meanings, it is also broader. It includes as well generally accepted oppositional meanings, such as, in our society, a belief in gender equality. Yet, despite this inclusion, because of the generally hegemonic nature of existing power relations in Britain, most common-sense meanings affirm or justify the status quo.

This normalised status that dominant relations and values achieve is crucial to their perpetuation: by what means does it arise? One important method is through their communication and affirmation by authoritative institutions: the education system, legal system, the mass media and so on. Linked to this is the pervasiveness of such dominant ideologies. Seeming to be everywhere, conveyed by a number of institutions and through a multitude of social relations, their 'self-evident' nature is strengthened.

The concept `structural ideology` is therefore helpful in drawing attention to the common-sense, uncontested nature of certain meanings, and to the role institutions such as local government and the education

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[4] For useful discussion on similar points, see C. Andrew (1984:675); T. Eagleton (1991:20); S. Hall (1985:105); G. Therborn (1980:2).

service can play. However, at the same time, it is important to stress that structural ideology, as I have defined it, is also fluid and contradictory - even more so than dominant ideology since it encompasses some oppositional meanings as well. Second, what is perceived as common sense will vary according to time and place. Third, people do not simply <u>accept</u> the interpretations conveyed to them, but rather <u>synthesise</u> meanings within their own conceptual and normative frameworks.

The final concept that requires explanation is `instrumental ideology`. Of all the terms discussed here, instrumental ideology is probably closest to the meaning of ideology within liberal political discourse. In contrast to neo-marxism, liberal theory treats ideology as functioning within a `market-place` of meanings. People, it is suggested, freely choose the ideas and interpretations that appeal to them most. By focusing on conscious ideological choices, liberal political discourse tends to ignore the ideological nature of meanings which are not contested or consciously articulated, that is, it ignores structural ideology. In referring to `instrumental ideology`, I mean those ideologies or meanings seen not as common-sense but rather as explicitly political. Generally held <u>consciously</u>, they are usually advocated as part of a process of intended social change.

Instrumental and structural ideology are terms that I use to identify the different ways ideologies operate - as common-sense or as explicitly political. Few ideologies, however, are exclusively one or the other. Thus, they can be seen as two sets which overlap. Non-structural ideologies will almost always function instrumentally, since

their counter-intuitive nature means they are likely to be consciously held. However, some structural ideologies also operate instrumentally, that is, they are seen as requiring defence, justification or promotion as well as reflecting `the way things are`.

Whilst structural and instrumental ideology are not perfect antinomies, they can also be treated as forming a continuum, with different meanings and norms settling at diverse points along it according to the intensity and extent of their ideological hegemony. No location along the continuum is permanent, thus, over time, the positioning of different ideologies changes. Taking heterosexuality as an example, for most of the twentieth century it operated exclusively within structural ideology, its self-evident nature being uncontested. Consequently, it was unnecessary and more probably unthinkable for groups or campaigns to prove its claims to truth. Now, however, as we approach the twenty-first century, although heterosexuality remains for most people common sense, challenges to its truth claims have forced others to its defence. In this way, proponents of a new right sexual politics have been forced into a dilemma. The more they `prove` heterosexuality's naturalness, the more they have to acknowledge and indeed affirm its contested nature (see chapter five).[5]

Having set out the key concepts for the rest of this thesis, I can now return to my original question: why were certain more progressive approaches to homosexuality organised out of the policy making process of local government prior even to being articulated? In part this

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[5] For discussion on a similar point in relation to ideology, see T. Eagleton (1991:6).

question has been addressed through my discussion of structural ideology. Clearly, those ideologies which operated almost exclusively at a structural level could not have been contested since at that point in time no oppositional interpretation existed. However, of greater concern here were those more radical meanings or approaches advocated outside of local government but suppressed or unthought within it. Examples might include: lesbianism as a fundamental challenge to male power; policies that promoted or celebrated a polymorphous sexuality; anti-imperialist critiques of social structures such as the nuclear family, current social mores and so on.

My argument is that such meanings or approaches were either not thought or else not articulated because of local government's inability legitimately either to articulate oppositional ideologies beyond the realms of structural ideology or else to deploy ideology in an instrumental manner. Let me take each of these points in turn, beginning with the second.

During the 1980s, the conscious communication of progressive ideologies was a major aspect of the politics of the new urban left. Within this context, lesbian and gay initiatives had an explicit ideological role, principally to alter people's attitudes around homosexuality in order to eradicate discrimination and prejudice. Yet, such attempts to deploy ideologies in an instrumental manner did not go unchallenged.

Opposition concerned not only lesbian and gay policies; nuclear free zones, anti-apartheid initiatives, anti-racist, anti-sexist strategies,

all came under attack (J. Gyford et al., 1989:310-2). However, what became increasingly evident was that the attack was not principally directed at the ideological substance of the policies, a content firmly rooted within equivocally oppositional structural ideologies such as equal opportunities (J. Pfeffer, 1981:ch. 6) and liberal-pluralism.[6] Rather, the opposition was directed at the purposive character of the initiatives: their conscious attempt to use local government in an ideological way.

To address why this was the case one needs to consider the nature of local government's assumed role. Dominant perceptions of this included providing services,[7] representing local residents, responding to their needs (D. S. King, 1989:187), and helping to maintain or regenerate the local economy. Within any of these projects, conflict was deemed inevitable and even acceptable (J. Gyford et al., 1989:299), providing it was kept within certain bounds.[8] Explicit attempts to achieve ideological restructuring were, however, another matter. This may have been because such attempts entailed going beyond the boundaries established in relation to each of local government's assumed roles; thus, they were perceived as extreme or uncontrollable. Alternatively,

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[6] Identified by D. S. King (1989:185) as `liberal-social democratic`.

[7] Leach (1989:103) argues that local government's role as provider and promoter of public services was accepted both by the Thatcher government and by the Widdicombe Committee set up to inquire into local government which reported in June 1986.

[8] See J. Gyford et al.'s (1989:4) discussion of the Widdicombe Committee. The Committee considered it appropriate for local government to have a political function with regard to conflicting perceptions as to how and which public services should be provided. See also G. Mather (1989:214), where he states that `the Thatcher government has been vigilant to police the borders of what it sees as acceptable local policy innovation`.

they were construed as an attempt to do something outside of local government's role altogether; therefore they were deemed inappropriate.

Yet why should ideological change be perceived as beyond local government's role? One explanation, advocated by some neo-marxists and socialist feminists, concerns the relationship between local government and the balance of power. At this historical juncture, it is argued, one of the tasks of local government is to mystify and depoliticise social relations,[9] hiding both the constellation of power that exists and the way it is facilitated and reproduced by state machinery. It is therefore crucial that local government is seen as being beyond the realms of ideological machinations, a basically a-political, non-partisan apparatus. In this way, the local state maintains its legitimacy and can operate with greater hegemony.

I now wish to turn to the second, and, I would argue, even more powerful prohibition on local government's ideological role which concerns the actual substance or content of the meanings conveyed. The strength of this interdiction can be seen in the fact that although the new urban left attempted to deploy local authorities in an instrumental ideological manner, there were almost no examples that I know of where councils conveyed oppositional, counter-intuitive meanings. This is perhaps a surprising point. Lesbian and gay policies, in particular, were lambasted by the mass media and by opponents for advocating `loony nonsense`. Yet, I would argue, the policies and initiatives referred to in this way, such as gay men's swimming sessions or anti-heterosexism training, whilst possibly unusual, were located within broadly liberal

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[9] See discussion of this argument by R. Barker (1990:92).

paradigms. Thus they did not constitute oppositional meanings beyond the realms of common-sense.

But perhaps this is putting the point too strongly. Such policies did entail the articulation of homosexuality with liberal precepts, a conjunction, one might argue, which gave previously mainstream notions a radical tint. This is a point I return to later in this chapter. However, here I wish to discuss why councils generally refrained from articulating non-consensual oppositional ideologies, why they chose not to use the powerful apparatuses of local government in this way.

One reason was that such meanings seemed inappropriate; few lesbian and gay municipal actors could seriously envisage, for example, a teacher standing up in class and telling female students that they should consider lesbianism as a positive option, despite the fact that the opposite was a common, if less explicit, occurrence. However, as well as feelings of inappropriateness, equally significant was the power of latent opposition. Whilst the opposition that mobilised against using ideologies instrumentally was significant, it was feared by many municipal actors that such opposition would intensify considerably if more radical approaches were articulated. For, at least in the case of the former, municipal actors could point to the common-sense, acceptable nature of the ideas being conveyed; but if non-structural ideologies were conveyed, both prohibitions would have been breached since such a project could only function instrumentally.

In this way, one can see how the two constraints on local government's ideological activity come together. The relationship

between them is particularly evident in considering local government's practice of reproducing dominant social meanings.[10] As I mentioned earlier in this section, the authoritative nature of local government discourse, produced and conveyed through local state institutions, was important as a way of giving those meanings that sustained dominant social relations their common-sense status. However, if local government was used explicitly to convey other meanings, this would not only undermine its neutrality and hence its legitimacy, but also the credibility of meanings and norms being conveyed. One might argue this would be in the interests of dominant forces, if that which was being conveyed was an oppositional sexual politics. However, it is important to remember that even whilst councils were developing policies which contested status quo meanings, at the same time, the majority of their other policies continued to affirm the status quo - sexual and otherwise.

Yet, local government's ability to reproduce status quo meanings depended not only on its status (undermined by deploying ideology in an instrumental manner), but also, on the actual meanings being conveyed. Using local government to affirm non-structural oppositional ideologies, as well as possibly giving credibility to such meanings, might also precipitate the (explicit) deconstruction of dominant, ideological meanings. Yet, this presupposes local government can do these things. The prohibition on local government conveying non-structural ideologies, I would argue, is so powerful and so internalised that the possibility barely exists. Moreover, I would suggest that even when authorities have made attempts to convey such

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[10] See S. Hall (1985:98).

ideologies, they have been unable either to give them credibility, to sustain them or to launch a deconstructive project.

To conclude, I have developed in this section a way of understanding why certain approaches to lesbian and gay sexual politics were unthought, or, if thought, unarticulated by municipal lesbian and gay actors. My analysis is based on two injunctions within dominant ideology. First, it was not deemed appropriate for local government to conduct itself as a political actor advocating a prescriptive social vision (instrumental ideology). Second, councils were not to convey ideologies which challenged existing notions of common-sense (structural ideology). I argue that left-wing actors either believed in these injunctions (consciously or otherwise), or, alternatively, knew that their breach would precipitate explicit conflict and the mobilisation of opposition against them. However, as I suggested above, the injunctions were violated to a limited degree. I return to this issue later on and there use the analysis developed above as a way of explaining what happened.

C. THE IMPLEMENTATION CRISIS.

I now wish to turn to the second theme of my study - implementation. In chapter four I examined implementation problems, and the strategies adopted in an attempt to overcome them. Here I wish to address the question: why was implementation of lesbian and gay policies so minimal? Although the mobilisation of bias against a radical sexual politics was an important aspect of the policy-making process, the problem identified by many of the lesbian and gay actors involved as

paramount was the inability to get policies operationalised (see chapters three and four).

1. Organisational factors.[11]

A key obstacle to the implementation of lesbian and gay policies arose from the hierarchical and job-segregated nature of public bureaucracies. This meant that those workers actually providing front-line services, hence implementing anti-discriminatory initiatives, were relatively uninvolved in their development. The traditional bureaucratic structure, whereby one set of actors makes policy and another carries it out, was left largely untransformed by the new urban left, the main initiators of municipal lesbian and gay policy work.[12] Although many lesbian and gay specialist officers attempted to work with front-line staff in developing policies, these ventures were too ad hoc and too little supported to make much impact.

Divisions between policy-makers and implementing officers had a number of consequences for the implementation of lesbian and gay work. First, as I have suggested, front-line officers were often unaware of the details of policy initiatives they were expected to implement.[13] In many instances, this bred a sense of hostility and resentment in

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[11] For a list of factors relating to 'perfect' implementation, see B. Hogwood and L. Gunn (1984:ch. 11).

[12] Although see P. Hoggett (1991:248) on the debureaucratisation and decentralisation measures of the municipal left in the 1980s. However, he argues such changes tended to be peripheral. I would also suggest they were not necessarily introduced by the same authorities as those that developed lesbian and gay initiatives.

[13] See S. Barrett and C. Fudge (1981:13-26) regarding obstacles to implementation.

`street-level` workers who felt they lacked `ownership` of policies[14] identified with management. Particularly in the case of some groups of manual workers, their sense of `us` and `them` led to the negative equation of lesbian and gay initiatives with `them`. Clearly, such a problem did not just affect lesbian and gay work. However, the newness of the policies, their controversial nature and the mixed messages received frommiddle-management meant many front-line workers perceived the policies as being illegitimately imposed upon them.

Front-line workers' exclusion from the formal policy-making process did not mean however that they possessed no discretion. Lipsky (1980) and others have examined in some depth the means by which `street-level` officers can resist initiatives and developments to which they are opposed. In the case of lesbian and gay policies, this power was quite considerable for a number of reasons. First, most departments' own lack of interest in lesbian and gay initiatives meant they tended not to insist on staff enforcement. Second, the very nature of anti-discriminatory policies strengthened front-line staff control.

Whilst some lesbian and gay initiatives entailed redistributive policies, such as, for example, placing particular books in libraries or obtaining funding for gay groups, the majority concerned `protective-regulatory` strategies, that is, structuring council work to reduce levels of discrimination and prejudice. Here, reaching a decision proved a less serious problem in comparison to redistributive

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[14] See E. McGarrell et al. (1990), implementation improves where front-line workers participate in decision-making. One also needs to distinguish between professional and other front-line workers, since the former's relationship to policies differs as a result of their greater job status and autonomy.

policies as the mass of EOPs reveals. The real difficulty was in achieving implementation. Attempts to tackle discrimination and prejudice in the provision of council services heavily depended on front-line officers actually not discriminating. Although authorities set up complaints procedures and in other ways tried to structure and contain officer discretion, for example, the use of micro-oriented policies (D. Lewis, 1984:218), it proved difficult to ensure council officers abided by EOPs unless they were actually committed to doing so.[15]

In cases where lesbian and gay officers were not in post, some councillors tried to intervene in the implementation process, pressurising front-line officers and middle management to ensure policies went ahead. The results were rarely successful. Where councillors did get closely involved, this tended to reinforce council staff's perceptions that lesbian and gay policies lacked legitimacy, being the self-interested whim of one or two councillors. For, not only were the policies themselves perceived negatively as being too ideologically instrumental, but the very act of councillor intervention in the implementation process revealed their illegitimacy. If the policies had been proper, it was argued, they would have been developed within the appropriate channels. The implications of such perceptions of lesbian and gay work were serious. According to Lorraine Trenchard, former lesbian and gay officer at Ealing council:

> "If officers think things are `loony`, they won't do anything."[16]

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[15] See generally M. Lipsky (1980:ch. 4).

[16] Interview with Lorraine Trenchard.

In discussing implementation problems it needs to be stressed that obstacles did not invariably come from front-line staff. In many cases, as I discussed in chapter four, individual council employees, such as teachers, childcare staff, housing and social services workers, attempted to put into practice lesbian and gay anti-discriminatory policies. The difficulties they faced arose from the lack of support, advice, encouragement, and, at times, even the dissuasion of senior or middle management within their departments. As a result, many front-line workers were put off, fearing the prospect of public complaints. If they put lesbian and gay policies into practice, would management back up their actions?

2 Political factors.

Throughout the 1980s, although many Labour councillors were prepared publicly to articulate support for lesbian and gay equality, most were satisfied for the commitment to remain a purely formal one.[17] For, questions of priority aside, Labour politicians were uneasy about the political implications of putting lesbian and gay equality into practice through effective implementation.

The desire to maintain political stability was a key consideration. Although the depth and extent of electoral anxiety varied between authorities, an inverse correlation existed to some extent with the size of the Labour group's political majority. Where the majority was greater, such as in Haringey, Manchester, and Camden, the necessity of

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[17] See S. Barrett and M. Hill (1986:38); see also D. Lewis (1984:205) on the importance of political support.

placating voters could be jettisoned in the short term. In Nottingham, on the other hand, where the Labour leadership was nursing a one seat majority, councillors remained perpetually conscious of the need to maintain sufficient support to stay in control and implement their priorities. Yet, the differing emphases on stability also highlighted ideological divisions. In Haringey, during the mid-1980s, the leadership was left-wing, with a commitment to change. Hence, they were both prepared and willing to take on the upheaval that might follow any challenge to vested interests. The same was not true, however, for more moderate leaderships, such as in Nottingham and, after 1986, in Camden and Islington (see chapter three).

Nevertheless, in the long-term no authority could operate effectively in a politically unstable situation. This point has particularly important implications for initiatives whose implementation would run over several years. For example, in the case of `positive images`, curricular and other educational changes would not have commenced until three or four years after the proposals were first mooted. However, by that point Haringey council, under a more moderate Labour leadership, was no longer prepared to withstand the opposition and destabilisation such a process would provoke. Thus, it seems that where policies were likely to be controversial, implementation only occurred in circumstances where it could take place quickly. For electoral and other political reasons (for example, the wish to implement a range of priorities), few councils were prepared to withstand long periods of disruption.[18]

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[18] Even though some leaders might be willing to accept such a situation, prolonged instability was likely to lead to party pressure for a change of leadership.

Yet, if many Labour councillors feared the implications of <u>implementing</u> lesbian and gay policies, why were they prepared to offer statements of support? What did they think verbalised and written declarations of commitment would alone achieve? These questions shift the focus of this discussion. Instead of examining the gap between policy and implementation, I ask: why promise policies when there was no serious intention to deliver them?

This is a paradox witnessed in many areas of equal opportunity work, in anti-sexist and anti-racist initiatives, as well as in develcping lesbian and gay equality work. Pfeiffer (1981:ch. 6), discusses these points. Using Edelman's work, he argues that political language and symbolic outcomes are used to placate sections of the community who are either unable to distinguish between `reality` and `symbols`, or where `symbolic` outcomes are what is desired (see chapter three).

Barrett and Hill (1986:38) argue that development of symbolic policies is also facilitated by the division between policy makers and implementers. Maintaining a distance from the implementation process makes it easier for councillors to offer token or symbolic gestures. They can make promises, heighten the sense of political dynamism (M. Edelman, 1988:ch. 2), whilst knowing and publicly asserting that implementation is unfortunately out of their control.

Yet why was there felt a need to placate lesbian and gay communities? To consider this question we need to go back a decade. In their development of EOPs in the late 1970s and early 1980s, in their

critique of prejudice and discrimination, Labour councils, largely unwittingly, laid the ground work for lesbian and gay policies. To have subsequently rejected or ignored this latter emergent community, with its experiences of hardship and disadvantage, would have necessitated producing arguments that distinguished the needs of lesbians and gays from those of other `minority` groupings. Within the new urban left's liberal-pluralist paradigms this would have been difficult to achieve. In addition, Labour authorities in certain districts began to consider it pragmatic and appropriate to respond to the growing political resources possessed by lesbians and gays. The alternative of dismissal was seen as risky, bringing with it the possible hazard of protest and opposition, as occurred in a number of authorities where council leaderships refused to include lesbians and gays in formal EOPs statements (see chapters two and three).

Yet, despite the fact lesbians and gays did not tend to mobilise against authorities that formally committed themselves to lesbian and gay policies, the extent to which they were satisfied[19] by political statements alone is uncertain. Whilst some may have accepted statements believing they would be followed by municipal developments; for others, acceptance was on the basis of a pragmatic belief that it was the most that could be expected at that given juncture. Yet such responses assume a clear distinction between formal policy and concrete

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[19] By this I do not mean to suggest they gave their full support. Some lesbians and gays did, whilst others simply acquiesced. There were also a number who remained utterly opposed to municipal lesbian and gay work for a variety of reasons and across the political spectrum.

implementation.[20] In contrast, I would argue that many lesbians and gays accepted the formal commitments because they perceived such statements themselves as an important component of the change process.

In making this point, I begin to problematise the distinctions drawn earlier between `symbols` and `reality`. The dissolving of such polarities was evident in lesbian and gay municipal work, where the focus on equality and non-discrimination meant that the production of specifically ideological texts were seen both as constitutive of `reality` as well as having an impact on the process of social change. Yet, how great was this impact? In chapter three I briefly discussed the nature of symbolic initiatives which I described as policies that (ostensibly) attempt to achieve predominantly ideological change by prefiguring its altered meanings through metaphor. To give an example, if the change desired is recognition and eradication of lesbians greater oppression, then this is prefigured by its representation - for instance, giving `lesbian` precedence in a committee title.

Such initiatives clearly have limitations. Yet, one might argue, it was largely for this reason that some were permitted by senior management and councillors, particularly where the prefiguring took place within municipal, as opposed to more public, arenas. An instance of the latter was the laying of 'pink' wreaths on Remembrance Day. Symbolic policies were deemed an economical way of appeasing a vocal,

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[20] The question of policy-making and implementation is not synonymous with the distinction drawn between symbolic policies and `real` policies. However, the two are similar, since symbolic policies, although implementable, for example, Islington's `pink plaques` policy (see chapter three), are seen as merely representative of commitment, rather than operationalising `concrete` changes in service provision or other areas of policy.

disadvantaged community. At the same time such appeasement had a cost, as witnessed in the vigorous opposition generated by right-wing forces to symbolic or purely formal lesbian and gay policies. For, despite the fact that ideological change cannot be achieved through discursive means alone, at the same time, in the case of instrumental ideological initiatives less disjuncture existed between verbal articulation and actual implementation. Hence, `non-implementation` would not necessarily appease opposing forces. For example, a policy that aimed to promote lesbians and gay men's acceptability as parents would largely be achieved, at least ostensibly, through publicising the initiative's existence.

However, although communication of council policies became part of the very process of implementation, the nature of such implementation was limited. Not only was this because implementation of most policies, even ideological ones, required more than their public announcement, but also because of the care councils took as to how and where they discussed or publicised such initiatives. This was evident in the limited arenas in which councillors and officers were prepared to talk about controversial policies, such as Haringey council's `positive images`. Although speeches were made in the council chamber and statements given to the press, little discussion took place outside of the traditional arenas of public debate, for example, amongst the intended beneficiaries of the policy: children in schools.[21]

I now wish to turn to the opposition lesbian and gay work generated. However, before doing so, I wish to make a final point about my

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[21] For discussion of this point, see D. Cooper (1989:72).

discussion of implementation. Examining implementation failure presupposes ascertainable policies to be implemented. One might argue therefore, that since only symbolic initiatives were intended by many leaderships, implementation can be seen as successful. In this thesis, I have drawn attention to the diverse, often conflicting goals - formal and informal - held by different municipal actors and the ways in which such goals changed over the period studied. For some actors their concern was to achieve legitimacy and stability, hence lesbian and gay work was a derivative objective, sometimes necessary for the achievement of primary goals and sometimes just a hindrance. Yet, whilst progressive lesbian and gay initiatives may have never been intended to succeed, a deeply sceptical approach to different actors' objectives marginalises the disjunction between political promise and what was delivered, and it was this gap that I wished here to examine.

D. OPPOSITION.

1. Local government and the private domain.

In chapter three, and at greater length in chapters five and six on Haringey, I documented the opposition lesbian and gay municipal initiatives provoked. Such opposition took the form of lobbying, deputations, demonstrations, media outrage, governmental intervention and legislation. Whilst it would be misleading to identify lesbian and gay policies as the only municipal focus of hostility, they were portrayed by many as the epitome of `loony leftism` and thus received the full wrath of opponents of the new urban left.

Earlier in this chapter, I discussed two prohibitions on municipal activity, campaigning for ideological change and the articulation of meanings beyond the boundaries of common sense (structural) ideology.[22] These two prohibitions would have affected the response to radical economic policies as much as those concerned with sexual politics. What then was particular about municipal lesbian and gay initiatives? Various factors have been advanced: the intimate connections between homosexuality and moral issues; the deep-rooted nature of sexuality as a socially constructed, if not biological, `truth`; and the impact of religion. Here I wish to consider a connected, although somewhat different issue, one that relates specifically to the articulation of sexuality and gender: the prohibition on local government's intervention in the private domain. Before going on to consider critically this proscription, I wish briefly to set out what I mean by the `private domain`.[23] The meanings attributed to the private sphere have varied politically and historically. Here, my concern is with two senses: (i) the domestic realm and (ii) as encompassing, if not synonymous with, sexuality and personal beliefs.

The domestic realm is an area of life in which the state's role has traditionally been an ambivalent one, with the ostensible emphasis on separation as illustrated by the state's historical treatment of marital sexual relations. On the one hand, one could argue this is because the husband or father acts as `the state` within the family, alternatively, that the state has taken on the role of `patriarch` in

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[22] See generally J. Gyford et al. (1989:281, 330).

[23] A number of feminist theorists have discussed the public-private distinction, see for example K. O'Donovan (1985:ch. 1, 4); C. Pateman (1988; 1989:ch. 6); S. Walby (1990:ch. 8).

relations between men in the public sphere. Eisenstein (1984:89) suggests a third alternative, that the state institutionalises and regulates the public-private division. By dividing the realms from each other, the state facilitates the reproduction in each of different values and organisational styles.[24] Thus its apparent absence from domestic life is as much an `intervention`, a structuring of domestic relations, as would be a more explicit intrusion.

In the context of local government, both direct penetration, particularly for working-class and Black families, as well as structuring by absence are evident. Through policies and services relating to council housing, education, social services and planning, local government has both assumed particular family structures, and through its provision, omissions and ideology helped to create or maintain them. At the same time, despite municipal interventions into the family and home, council practices reproduce meanings that entrench the ideology of domestic privacy.

The power and pervasiveness of privacy as an ideology and discourse was central to the opposition shown to lesbian and gay initiatives. Such`policies were deemed to challenge those aspects of domestic and family life considered most personal and private - sex and one's beliefs.[25] But why were lesbian and gay policies singled out in this way? Other sexual and familial policies also intervened in these areas. The important issue here is `challenge`. As long as the meanings being

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[24] See also N. Fraser on Habermas and gender (1987:ch. 2).

[25] See D. Held's (1987:84) discussion of the legitimacy crisis as a result of more areas becoming politicised through increased state intervention. See also R. Barker (1990:167).

conveyed remained within structural ideology and even more within dominant ideology, they existed for the large part as invisible. It was only when councils appeared to go outside of this, when they appeared to be explicitly promoting new sexual and familial beliefs, that their work was deemed, or could be constructed as constituting, an interference with the ideological sanctity of the private realm.

Opposition to what was perceived as municipal penetration of the private realm came from all sections of the community, and from the left as well as the right - a detail authorities ignored to their cost. Lesbian and gay initiatives, at least ostensibly, were predicated on a belief in the well-intentioned state; why else would people accept further statist intrusions into their lives? Attitudes towards the state divided the progressive community in their response to lesbian and gay initiatives. Criticism came, amongst others, from Bea Campbell, writing in Marxism Today,[26] and also in Haringey from members of the community group, Haringey Black Action. Whilst some members supported the council's initiatives, others saw them as irrelevant to the problems facing lesbians and gays or as damaging to the Black community because of the increasing state penetration they signified.[27]

Although many councils disclaimed such interventions, arguing their policies were located in the public sphere, their response satisfied few. For reasons already discussed, most people perceived sexual

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[26] Marxism Today, February 1987.

[27] See D. Cooper (1989:55-6); S. Rowbotham (1989:145). See also K. Mercer and I. Julien (1988:109) on the state's stereotypical construction of Black people's sexuality; within this context, to what extent should attempts by local government actors to ostensibly validate Black gay sexuality be trusted?

politics as too intimately connected with the private realm to accept municipal disclaimers. For others, their hopes of a substantial political resettlement were dashed by liberal affirmations of the public-private divide.

2. Gender and homophobia.

Yet in understanding the opposition to lesbian and gay policies, it is vital to look beneath public discourse. Whilst the arguments of opponents largely focused, as I have said, on state penetration and disruption of the private sphere, equally important, although understated, was anti-lesbian and gay feeling. In chapter five, I discussed the predominance of liberal sexual paradigms which forced not only the left, but the right as well, to re-articulate their positions. However, underlying such paradigms, what attitudes and images of homosexuality were held by opponents of the policies? This discussion can only be tentative, since the lack of a plethora of 'evidence' makes conclusions difficult. Some statements do, however exist, which I will incorporate into the discussion; otherwise, the sexual meanings considered are based on more general theoretical work and research.

My focus here is on the content and roots of homophobia: a fear, disgust and loathing of homosexuals. I have chosen this focus in order to explore the ways in which gendered individuals negotiate and live their relations to sexual orientation, an intersection of three interconnected variables: ideology, interests and materiality. Whilst, I would agree with critics of the term who argue it does not tell us

why such feelings exist nor how to eradicate them;[28] `homophobia` does, I believe, helpfully focus attention both on the content of negative lesbian and gay images, as well as on the intensity of responses.

Paradoxically, from a feminist perspective, the least observable form of homophobia in the opposition to lesbian and gay municipal policies was that expressed by heterosexual men towards lesbianism. I would suggest this was for two key reasons. First, lesbian and gay initiatives did not generally develop or publicise a feminist analysis of sexuality, in particular of lesbianism. Second, male anti-lesbianism seemed to take in this instance a more patronising form, negating the independence lesbianism might proffer by ignoring its existence. An example is the Earl of Halsbury's speech in the House of Lords.

> "Lesbians were (not) a problem. They do not molest little girls...They are not wildly promiscuous and do not spread venereal disease. It is part of the softening up propaganda that lesbians and gays are nearly referred to in that order. The relatively harmless lesbian leads on to the vicious gay...but...the loony left is hardening up the lesbian camp and...they are becoming increasingly aggressive."[29]

The pervasiveness of male antagonism and opposition to lesbianism has been analysed by a number of feminist writers.[30] Explanations include perceiving lesbianism as a symbolic challenge to male authority, the withdrawal of emotional and material servicing as well

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[28] See C. Kitzinger (1987).

[29] The Earl of Halsbury, House of Lords, 18 December 1986, col. 310.

[30] See C. Douglas (1990); L. Faderman (1981); S. Jeffreys (1990).

as of `consensual` hetero-sexual access,[31] and the links between lesbianism and female political/emotional solidarity.

Yet, in a patriarchal society, it is not men's dislike of lesbianism that is surprising.[32] What is perhaps more in need of explanation is the fear and hatred many men feel towards male homosexuality. As Frye (1983:135) claims, in a `male supremacist culture` not to love men is the worst possible sin. Yet, at the same time, she argues, straight men are anti-gay. Frye's explanation for such a phobic reaction is men's fear of an unlimited, ungovernable masculinity.

This is an interesting comment in light of the contradictory stereotypical portrayal of gay men as not only highly sexually active, but as also effeminate. Petchesky (1985:271) emphasises this second quality in the context of the North American new right, whom, she argues, saw male homosexuality as signifying a breakdown in masculinity.[33] However, that gender and sex should be linked in this way is not inevitable. In many cultures, homosexuality, and to a greater extent, bisexuality, have been seen as compatible with more `macho` forms of masculinity. Petchesky's statement also raises a further question. Why should a breakdown in traditional masculinity matter? One answer is that both masculinity and heterosexuality are perceived as

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[31] See C. Smart (1989:ch. 2); `In saying no to sex, women are also challenging the extensive power of men which goes beyond sex` (1989:32).

[32] By this I do not mean that all men are anti-lesbian. However, it could be argued that anti-lesbianism is a `rational` position for men to take within a capitalist patriarchal society where women formally have the legal and economic means to choose not to reside with men.

[33] For other explanations of homophobia, see L. Reiter (1991:166).

serving some other goal or set of social relations. It is not therefore simply a matter of considering what is in male interests. If that were the case, male homosexuality might be acceptable. Rather, the issue is the nature of the implications for relations of class and nation of a particular kind of masculinity and sexual behaviour.[34] Kinsman (1987:105) appears to advance this more functionalist perspective when he argues that `queer-baiting and the social taboo against homosexuality serves to keep all men in line`.

Are heterosexual men then as much the victims of homophobia as gay men? Were the men who opposed lesbian and gay policies equally oppressed by dominant sexual ideologies? Whilst this may have been true at some metaphysical level, undoubtedly few heterosexual males perceived it to be the case. Rather, they saw themselves in opposition to male homosexuality; the `other` by which they were defined. Herek (1987:72) makes a similar point when he suggests heterosexual men reaffirm their male identity through attacking gay men. To what extent were these fears paralleled in the opposition shown by <u>women</u> to municipal lesbian and gay strategies?

In the USA, many of the right's campaigns against feminist and gay initiatives have been led, actively engaged in, and supported by women. This phenomenon of new right women has been discussed by several feminist writers, particularly in the USA, such as Dworkin (1983), Eisenstein (1984), Klatch (1987) and Petchesky (1985). In Britain,

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[34] One analysis of the stigmatisation of homosexuality is based on the contradiction it poses to the nuclear family ideal of modern capitalism, see, for example, S. Walby (1990:118). J. Weeks (1989:75) argues that notions of social purity, important within capitalism, were facilitated by the homosexual as `other`.

local campaigns such as the Parents Rights Group in Haringey, as well as other organisations opposed to lesbian and gay equality, had women as leading participants. In discussing why this might have been the case I wish to focus on one key factor, heterosexual women's attitudes towards homosexuality - male and female.

In the case of gay men, the homophobia felt by many women centred on what was perceived as the former's `uncontrollable` sexuality. Fears of paedophilia, sexual harassment and violence, localised truths for many women, were projected by them, by heterosexual men, and by the media, onto gay men, forcing the latter to become the sexualised 'other' against which heterosexual men could be favourably compared. Although women's fears of gay men took a number of forms,[35] in the context of lesbian and gay policies, a key issue was the protection of children's sexuality.[36] As I discussed in chapters five and six, such fears came to a head over the children's book Jenny lives with Eric and Martin. But what did women fear for their children?

The images of what it would mean for sons to turn out gay functioned at different levels of awareness or consciousness. At an articulated level, many women feared the dissolution of the family. Less articulated was the corollary that their sons would never marry and settle down, and less conscious still, the image of arid, unfulfilled lives as dusty bachelors. Interwoven with this set of images was

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[35] It seems possible that the fear was more to do with some abstracted notion of gay male sexuality than of gay men themselves, since many women would have had social relationships with men they knew were gay. Similar points have been made about the nature of racism.

[36] See speeches of Conservative councillor, Harwood, and PRG member, Headd, at Full Council meeting, 20 October 1986.

another, also operating at different levels of consciousness. Gay sexuality was a temptation that, once given in to, would latch its tentacles into `victims` with incredible tenacity. In addition, the sexual release provided by homosexual activity might also unleash other repressed desires. Women's sons would become savage wild animals; refusing to fulfil their responsibilities, they would live out their days in the twilight of civilization. Although barely expressed in the public arena in relation to homosexuality, these contradictory, yet condensed images, became crystallised in public discourse on AIDS. Thus, AIDS became a focus for much of the opposition towards lesbian and gay municipal work. In the mid-1980s at least, comments could be made about AIDS which would have been deemed unacceptable if explicitly directed at gay men.

Equally as powerful as many women's fears of gay male sexuality was their disgust of lesbianism. Yet, whilst it might be possible to argue that men's withdrawal of sexual interest from women is contrary to the latter's interests, this seems a harder argument to pursue in the context of lesbianism. Clearly, many women feared their daughters being proselytised, as was made evident in the opposition shown to Camden council when it tried to establish a lesbian centre.[37] Aside from that, lesbianism was perceived as symbolising women's failure and disempowerment. Such homophobia was largely grounded in many heterosexual women's own investment in their femininity. Onto lesbians was projected all the self-disgust felt by women who saw themselves as personally failing to attain the feminine ideal. Not only did lesbians fall short by their very identity as lesbians, but, as well, by

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[37] Personal knowledge.

consciously and explicitly rejecting feminine goals, many lesbians were perceived as insulting and negating other women's own `choices` and lives.

Identified with ugliness and male rejection, lesbianism was also perceived within dominant ideology as a parody of heterosexuality: two women mimicking heterosexual love, second-rate because never able to authentically replicate the `real thing`. Whilst androgenous looking lesbians were denigrated for rejecting feminine ideals, butch-femme lesbians were frequently pitied, as poor, pathetic substitutes - a life no woman would wish on her daughters.

Yet to understand female anti-lesbianism, it is also necessary to consider what heterosexuality offers women, to consider why women have such an investment in status quo heterosexual relations. Arguments that women have been duped, aside from being insulting, do not adequately explain the subtle workings of ideology, nor the actual benefits women receive. One set of explanations can be found in the relationship between power and sexuality. As a result of unequal gender relations, for many women, particularly white, middle-class houseworkers, their attachment to men is their primary link to public power. Lesbianism, in contrast, symbolises the negation of power, by linking women to others as marginal as themselves. Collins (1990:193-5) suggests this latter point is particular pertinent for Black, working class women since their only coincidence with the norm is by virtue of their heterosexuality. But it is not just a matter of power or mainstream status outside of the home. In the USA, right-wing women focus on the security heterosexual units grant women. They argue that women's

liberation, in contrast, lets men `off the hook`, since they are no longer (held) responsible for meeting women's physical and economic needs.

Heterosexuality offers women an apparent means of ensuring that those agents with relatively greater political and economic power remain linked to them. Crucial to such security is the notion of women as desirable objects, to be cherished and protected by men.[38] The ideology of heterosexual romance is important to many women. It symbolises men's need for women, offers women a form of power (A. Snitow, 1983:252), and provides a highly seductive, exciting image.

Yet to what extent does this explain some heterosexual women's anti-lesbianism? I would suggest that perhaps investment in the offerings of romance is greatest amongst those women for whom it remains an ideal, for whom the rest of life seems harsh and unyielding. Promoting homosexuality thus seemed to be taking away this last social good, leaving a world unenviably grey.

E. THE CHANGING NATURE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT LESBIAN AND GAY POLICIES, 1987 TO 1991.

Between 1987 and 1991, local government underwent a number of changes, and, by 1991, specialist lesbian and gay municipal structures had largely disappeared. In this section I wish to discuss how this happened by considering four sets of factors: central government

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[38] See J. Radway (1987).

intervention, financial and legislative changes, the altered discourse of councillors and officers, and community disillusionment.

Councils like Haringey epitomised for central government their growing dissatisfaction with the local state more generally. Within this context, the Widdicombe Inquiry was established in 1985, and subsequently, legislation introduced, intended to deal with the `cancer`, the `new corruption` that was penetrating local government (J. Gyford et al., 1989:280). As Ridley, Secretary of State for the Environment stated (1988) (quoted in D. S. King, 1989:198), `where local responsibility breaks down there is inevitably stronger pressure for central intervention`.

According to Gyford et al. (1989), central government's sudden concern with local authorities owed much to the threat or at least the obstruction they posed to the government's dominant strategy for securing economic and social welfare. However, in their discussion, Gyford et al. are scathing about the threat posed by `sub-revolutionary rhetoric` (1989:326), which they claim `no serious observer could have imagined...(would) have...possessed the resources necessary to overthrow an elected government`. Undoubtedly this is true. However, what they ignore is the substantive <u>ideological</u> challenge posed by authorities who attempted to restructure common sense meanings. Combined with a strategy of using ideology in an instrumental manner, this process brought down on left-wing councils the wrath of the general public, media, and central government.[39] More importantly,

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[39] Arguably it was also about redefining the boundaries of the political, see H. Butcher et al. (1990:158).

authorities such as Haringey partially lost their legitimacy as state apparatus.[40]

This latter process was evident in a number of ways. First, diverse outside forces intervened, treating the councils as if they were oppositional campaigning bodies rather than public institutions. This is, I believe, an important point. Because authorities began to behave more like grass-roots pressure groups, they were treated as such. Thus the extra legitimacy and authority they had possessed as governmental bodies, which assisted in the communication of dominant meanings, largely evaporated when they stopped conveying such meanings. In the case of Haringey, accused by local residents of lying, misleading and misrepresenting (see chapter five), the council lost much of its status as an `authoritative constructor of social reality` (G. Salaman, 1980:ch. 11). Opponents of `positive images` threatened publicly to burn local authority books and to keep children out of schools without bringing on themselves any of the censure that usually follows such activities. Instead, the council was censured for lawlessness and violence (see chapters five and six).

Second, the process of delegitimisation was exacerbated by central government intervention which pushed councils towards crisis and then, by reasserting the dominant relations of power within the state, back towards `normalcy`.[41] The first stage was achieved by heightening the discursive struggle already taking place, and by lending support to

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[40] See R. Barker (1990:161).

[41] See broad discussion on the state's response to ideological crisis by B. Jessop (1990:65).

the policies opponents; whilst the second entailed legislation, ministerial regulation, and derision.

This last technique, deployed throughout the government's opposition to `positive images`, was an important factor in forcing authorities such as Haringey to take their <u>own</u> action to contain and undermine lesbian and gay initiatives. Leaderships acted, motivated by a determination to regain legitimacy as a credible state body. Whilst the government introduced the Local Government Act 1988, S. 28 demonstrating the political consequences of `stepping out of line`, it was left to political forces within the Labour Party and local government to do the rest. How intentional or conscious any of this process was is hard to say. However, the continuing assault on councils by the centre, combined with the Labour Party's desperate drive to regain political credibility, caused authorities like Haringey to eschew policies that would escalate their de-legitimisation to constituents and establishment alike. Instead, they were propelled to emphasise those aspects of their work which depicted them as efficient, well-managed authorities, providing the services required within the legislative framework operating.

In addition to central government's direct intervention in relation to particular policies such as `positive images`, their political agenda more generally impacted upon lesbian and gay municipal initiatives. Between 1987 and 1991, local government underwent a number of changes as the Thatcherite agenda of individualism, familial morality and private market mechanisms gained ground (H. Butcher et al., 1990). The introduction of new housing policy, compulsory

competitive tendering, educational reform, and other limits on local government powers,[42] all had implications for the development of equal opportunity policies. However, I would argue the major challenge to lesbian and gay initiatives, and to EOPs more generally, was the financial crisis that faced many authorities following the 1987 general election.

Banking on a national Labour victory, many new urban left councils had spent the preceding years using financial creative accounting techniques to expand their work in line with policy commitments or to maintain a steady level of service provision in the face of repeated central government attempts to reduce local authority spending. The 1987 Conservative victory, however, forced many local Labour Parties to reconsider their financial position (see chapter three). In Haringey, the left-wing council leadership refused to make cuts, arguing for a strategy of defiance and non-compliance. In September 1987, it was replaced by a leadership from the party's centre. Elsewhere, left-wing leaders either stood down or remained prepared to implement a new political and financial agenda.

Lesbian and gay initiatives suffered heavily in the budgetary reductions of 1987/8. Their perceived unpopularity meant they were offered up as savings in Haringey and Camden, despite the limited financial difference this would make. The new political leaderships of the late 1980s, more closely aligned with the national Labour Party leadership, tended also to be less sympathetic to lesbian and gay policy, prioritising instead political and electoral stability. Thus,

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[42] C. Moore (1991).

aside from the financial cut-backs faced directly by lesbian and gay and equal opportunity units, attempts to get other services to develop and implement lesbian and gay initiatives became increasingly difficult as officers sensed the issue's political deprioritisation. Faced with growing workloads, shrinking budgets and reduced staffing levels from voluntary and compulsory redundancy programmes as well as the freezing of posts, management felt able to legitimately refuse or to alternatively stall on developing lesbian and gay work.

Haringey council was one of the hardest hit, facing financial crises that recurred annually between 1987 and 1991. Twice it faced S.114 reports, newly implemented government legislation, which brought `non-essential` spending to a stand-still.[43] Lesbian and gay work's lack of any statutory basis (apart from the discriminatory bases of the Local Government Act 1988, S. 28 and the Education (No. 2) Act 1986) affected its position throughout the periods of budgetary reductions. As councils became financially leaner, the choice of what to cut grew increasingly harder as statutory provision had to be protected. It was also difficult to reduce or withdraw apparently popular services such as education, libraries and social services.

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[43] The Finance Act 1988, under which reports were issued, transferred considerable power to local government finance directors who were responsible for issuing a report when it appeared the authority's budget might run into deficit in that financial year. Some finance directors used this power to achieve certain demands by threatening to otherwise issue S. 114 reports. Thus its impact has been greater than can be determined from the number of reports issued. Once issued, a report lasted until sufficient savings had been made for the council's budget no longer to be heading for a deficit. Such savings arose from halting all `non-essential` expenditure, which included everything that was neither statutory nor contractual. Lesbian and gay work was one of the areas severely hit. Not only did it stop expenditure during the period of a report, but it undermined planning and policy development over a longer period within the authorities concerned.

Ongoing financial crises did not hit all authorities as severely as Haringey.[44] However, other financial modifications also affected lesbian and gay work. One key change was the financial reorganisation in many authorities that followed the introduction of compulsory competitive tendering (CCT) in the Local Government Act 1988.[45] Recharging systems were introduced so that central services' costs would be paid for from departmental rather than centrally held budgets. This was statutorily required in order that council bids for municipal tenders would not have a competitive advantage through having part of their running costs subsidised.[46]

It is too early too identify the full effects of recharging on lesbian and gay work. However, from the start, new accounting techniques increased pressure on local authorities to keep their central costs, including equal opportunity units, as low as possible (H. Butcher et al., 1990:163). Equal opportunity officers within tendering services were made redundant and equal opportunity training for employees in those services deleted.[47] Whilst CCT has so far only affected a few services, such as parks maintenance, cleaning, catering

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[44] See E.M. Davies et al. (1986:ch. 10).

[45] See P. Hoggett (1991:248-9); Local Government Information Unit, Equality News, February 1992, no. 13; and personal knowledge regarding Haringey council.

[46] Tender bids were made on the basis of departmental projections as to how cheaply they could run a service. Clearly, this would be much less if some of their costs, such as training, personnel, strategic development, EOPs were met by other departments.

[47] See Local Government Information Unit, Equality News, February 1992, no. 13; and also personal knowledge.

and public works,[48] many authorities have introduced recharging, private sector financial management, and (departmental) cash limited budgets across their councils.

The introduction of market finance systems needs to be seen as part of a broad shift in the ethos of local authorities during the late 1980s as notions of `equality` gave way to those of `quality` and `efficiency`. The discourses of central government began to be taken on by council officers and councillors. Local government's role was changing. CCT and other legislation meant that its primary ostensible function was no longer to provide services but to co-ordinate their provision by other bodies - private and voluntary (N. Flynn, 1989:103). Thus, as well as the direct impact of changes on lesbian and gay units, the newly emerging role of local government further reduced units' remit. As more services and provision were taken on by other bodies in the voluntary and private sector, lesbian and gay officers, and councillors found it increasingly difficult to ensure EOPs were applied.[49] Whilst, in theory, councils as purchasers of services and provision should have been able to insist on EOPs, in practice this was extremely difficult since council officers were unable easily to monitor or co-ordinate work with external bodies.[50]

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[48] Public works includes building, rehabilitation, decoration and maintenance of council buildings, residential and non-residential.

[49] D. Lewis (1984:207) argues that communication might be easier between managers at the same level in different organisations than vertical communication within one institution. However in the case of lesbian and gay work, such horizontal communication structures tended not to exist, except with the progressive voluntary sector.

[50] See E. McGarrell et al. (1990:438) on the difficulties where implementation involves interagency development and communication.

Attitudes to EOPs work amongst councillors and officers were also changing, particularly in authorities seen as having led the way. Singh, chief executive of Haringey council, opening a conference on `Equalities` organised by the Local Government Information Unit, argued that equal opportunity units were no longer appropriate, that what was needed was `mainstreaming`, getting the departments to take responsibility for equalities work.[51] I do not intend here to criticise this approach, except to suggest that the reason units were initially set up was because services were not deemed sensitive or committed to EOPs. Whether this has changed sufficiently for units now to be redundant, and whether the structures exist to ensure equal opportunity work would not be marginalised in departments are contested issues.

In conjunction with these changes, authorities such as Camden, Islington, Manchester, and Haringey, faced the increasing disillusionment of lesbian and gay communities (see chapter three). As several activists stated in interviews, lesbian and gay municipal policies happened because gays and lesbians, whether as officers, Labour Party members, community activists or councillors, demanded and fought for them. However, the effects of professionalisation, the realisation how slow and difficult change was to achieve, the ineffectiveness of lesbian and gay committees, and the lack of implementation despite paper promises, led many lesbian and gay activists to lose faith in the possibilities local government offered

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[51] See D. Cooper (1991:16); see also Local Government Information Unit, Equality News, March 1992, no. 14.

(see chapter three).[52] Such tensions were exacerbated as lesbian and gay officers and councillors found themselves unable to fulfil the demands placed upon them. To some on the outside they seemed increasingly complacent and co-opted.[53] Thus, in many authorities the working links between officers, councillors and a committed, wider gay community began to dissolve.

Yet it would be wrong to see the transformation of lesbian and gay municipal policies as entirely negative. In Camden, a consultant report in 1990 led to the re-structuring of lesbian and gay work. In 1991, all Camden's equal opportunity units and committees were merged into one, a transformation mirrored across the country, but not seen by all lesbian and gay officers as inevitably negative.

> "The changes happened because the units were not effective...It was a way of bringing things together and providing co-ordination."(L. Trenchard interview)

In Islington too, 1991 was seen as the time for a new start. Despite co-options no longer being legally permitted, the newly returned chair of Islington's Lesbian and Gay Committee, Bob Crossman, was determined to improve community participation and to avoid past mistakes.[54] These he identified as trying to implement change too quickly and

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[52] In Manchester, for example, at the date of completion (May 1992), neither the Lesbian nor the Gay Men's Sub-Committee had met for many months.

See also R. Barker (1990:93) on the effects on legitimacy where the state is unable to meet expectations; that is where unmet demands turn into dissatisfaction.

[53] See S. Franzway et al. (1989:ch. 7) on the experience of `femocrats` in Australia.

[54] Interview with Bob Crossman.

underestimating the need for allies. Crossman hoped the revamped committee would be more successful.

Elsewhere, beyond London, activists in authorities as diverse as Bristol, Rochdale, Birmingham and Edinburgh continued to argue, campaign and to varying degrees secure lesbian and gay policies and funding. Although lesbian and gay activists in these authorities had watched and learned from the mistakes made elsewhere, at the same time many of the demands made mirrored those of the early 1980s, such as for lesbian and gay centres, specialist officers and committees. Nevertheless, despite the general continuing emphasis on bureaucratic structures, the political climate had changed. Initiatives springing up in the early 1990s seemed less aspirational and more cautious, grounded in entrenching and normalising the contested achievements of the previous decade.

CHAPTER EIGHT.

CONCLUSION: THE POTENTIAL FOR CHANGE.

In the conclusion to this thesis, I wish to return to the question first raised in the introduction: can local government substantially transform sexual politics? By this I mean sexual politics both within, but more especially outside, the municipal infrastructure. So far I have discussed the problems, limitations and constraints. I now wish to address the possibilities.

The potential of the state to engineer progressive change is a topic that has received significant discussion from neo-marxists, amongst others. Challenging instrumentalist marxist analyses that the state responds directly to the ruling class and therefore the only solution is its overthrow, neo-marxists have used a variety of approaches to explain and analyse the possibilities for progressive manoeuvre within the state itself. These have ranged from the mechanistic,[1] to others emphasising the importance of collective agency and the `exploitation of contradictions`.[2] Whilst this thesis has explored the attempts and achievements of different actors as well as revealing a number of contradictions in local state practice which undoubtedly could be exploited, I do not wish to develop these strategies here. Rather, in this conclusion, I want to draw on the insights of feminist and post-structuralist analyses by discussing the prospects a decentred approach to municipal sexual politics might provide. However, before doing so,

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[1] See E. O. Wright (1978).

[2] See R. Miliband (1978); N. Poulantzas (1973).

there are two general points I wish to make. The first appertains to the relationship between ideology and collective provision; the second concerns the nature of bureaucratic lesbian and gay policies.

In this thesis I have focused on ideology rather than collective provision and services since it was at the level of ideology that lesbian and gay council initiatives posed the greatest potential challenge to the status quo (see chapter seven). However, it is none the less important not to neglect local government's key role in the area of providing public services. Linda Bellos, former leader of Lambeth council, when interviewed, expressed criticisms of council politicians who concentrated on using local government as a campaigning tool rather than on improving service provision. She argues that few councils were able to do both jobs adequately and that since local government was neither well-placed nor appropriate as an ideologue its primary objective should be to provide the best services possible for the entire community.

The nature of this relationship between service provision and ideology is crucial in rethinking local government's ability to convey a progressive sexual politics. First, we need to question the extent to which collective provision or services can be seen as non-ideological. Enabling lesbians and gays to adopt and foster, for example, challenges traditional sexual meanings. Yet, even less ostensibly innovative policies, I would argue, can have important ideological implications. Improving housing provision for low income households or eradicating discriminatory terms in tenancy agreements may seem ideologically unchallenging. However, people without severe housing worries may be

more ready to organise politically around other issues.[3] Moreover, as I stated at the beginning of this thesis, ideology is not autonomous. It is as much affected by changes elsewhere as by `direct attack`. Thus, if the economic, social and cultural position of lesbians, gays and heterosexuals changes, in part due to transforming local government's provision of services, this will impact upon the meanings attributed to sexuality and gender.

Therefore, in considering the potential of local authorities, we need to consider a wide range of municipal practices, not just those that ostensibly seem to be about conveying oppositional ideologies. This brings me to my second point: the intersection of bureaucracy and sexuality. A number of issues relating to this convergence have already been raised, particularly in chapter seven. Here I wish to draw attention to two further issues, whose examination, I believe, may point the way to potentially more successful local government strategies.

I begin with the problem of closure. In chapter five, I argued that municipal texts on lesbian and gay policies possessed insufficient closure, that is, they were too vague, tentative, and hence open to conflicting interpretations. At the same time, however, the very nature of bureaucratic discourse and policy-making meant that certain positions, perspectives and analyses became temporarily frozen as authoritative.[4] This can be seen most clearly in the discursive

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[3] This point contests the assumption of some left-wing parties that people mobilise most when they are deprived, marginalised and oppressed.

[4] See P. Nanton and M. Fitzgerald (1990:157).

dominance of equal opportunities, within which conceptual framework lesbian and gay politics had to be located. As I discussed in chapter seven, lesbian and gay policies were possible because a tenable paradigm for their development - equal opportunities - already existed. The meanings immanent in such an approach had an important effect on how lesbian and gay politics was perceived. Thus, the `problem` became unfair treatment of a minority group, the `objective`: equality of opportunity and the `solution`: anti-discriminatory initiatives.

A second difficulty arose as a result of the hierarchical nature of local government which made debate, struggle and change very difficult to achieve except between bureaucratic equals. One might argue that lesbian and gay policies were <u>based</u> on the wishes and demands of lesbians and gays; however, as I have shown, such wishes were powerfully mediated by local authority structures and processes. As well, the very people whose behaviour and practices were supposed to change as a result of lesbian and gay policies, in particular front-line staff, were formally excluded from the process of policy development. Instead, they received documents and literature explaining the council's position, as did local heterosexual residents whose <u>positive</u> participation was also marginalised.

Not only was the autocratic nature of such a process antithetical to a dialogue of change but, moreover, it made the production of `subjugated knowledge` within a municipal sexual politics practically impossible.[5] Lesbian and gay policies, in common with other equal

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[5] See K. Ferguson (1984). By `subjugated knowledge` I mean some form of `oppositional` knowledge (see chapter seven), produced from the perspective of the subordinated subject.

opportunity initiatives, were unusual in that they were ostensibly constructed from the perspective of the oppressed or disadvantaged subject. Thus, their production was grounded in the agency of lesbian and gay municipal actors rather than heterosexuals speaking on their behalf. Yet, at the same time, the actual knowledge `produced` was paradoxically located within dominant explanations of the `problem` as a result of developing lesbian and gay initiatives within the local state. For the discursive framework to have been different, lesbian and gay community activists needed a stronger role, first, to be able to develop initiatives and second, to do so ideologically removed from dominant municipal paradigms. This did not happen. Despite the co-optee structure, public meetings, community consultation and so on, too much control was preserved by the local council. It could not produce subjugated knowledge for reasons discussed elsewhere (see chapters four and seven). Yet, at the same time, the council's hierarchical arrangement of power meant little space was provided for such knowledge to be effectively developed and communicated from any place else.

These dilemmas of `frozen` discursive positions and bureaucratic hierarchy are linked to a further one - local government's emphasis on sexual identity rather than sexual politics. As I have shown, councils attempted to construct at most a multi-cultural environment of lifestyles (see chapters three to five). Lesbians and gays were a constituency, with needs, demands and experiences of discrimination that undermined status quo discourses of prevailing formal equality. Councils, it was recognised, discriminated; their departments were guilty of heterosexism. Yet, in the main, such problems were perceived as both epiphenomenal, and, at the same time, remediable, leaving the

`real` work of local government intact. Few perceived councils, in contrast, as inherently sexed and gendered, or sexed and gendered in ways that could not be easily transformed.

In trying to tackle the difficulties lesbians and gay men experienced, local councils were both unwilling and unprepared to ground their approach in an explicit discourse of sexual politics. What do I mean by this? Elsewhere, I have suggested that authorities articulated a liberal sexual politics based on notions of rights, freedom and discrimination (see chapter four). Is this point then contradictory? In some ways it is, for although there was a kind of sexual politics underlying council lesbian and gay initiatives, at the same time there was an absence: the inability to ground lesbian and gay policies, that is, both homosexuality and local government practices, in an explicit, wider analysis of power, sexuality and gender.

Leaving the issue of whether local government is inevitably sexed, and what that means, to one side, I wish to focus on sexual politics as it relates to homosexuality and council policies. Bob Crossman raises a related issue when he argues that lesbian and gay sexuality highlights important questions for heterosexually-defined people as well.[6] Thus, in developing lesbian and gay policies, local councils needed to consider their potential impact, both positive and negative, on the community as a whole, linking the issues lesbian and gay initiatives raised to other sexual questions. Examples of this might be the construction of masculinity and femininity, heterosexuality as

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[6] Interview with Bob Crossman.

choice or privilege, sexual violence, domestic labour, and the problematic of consent and desire.

Yet why should such an approach be deemed necessary? Why can councils not just focus on homosexuality? I have not the space here to provide a long explanation and much of the analysis has already been set out in earlier chapters. However, briefly, from a feminist perspective, I would argue that homosexuality cannot be seen in isolation for the following reasons. First, the causes of heterosexism and homophobia, the deployment of the homosexual stigma as a means of `policing` gender, cannot be adequately understood without a complex gendered analysis of power. Second, to contest effectively engrained prejudice and discrimination it is vital to consider which groups, if any, have an investment (emotional, social, political and economic) in the sexual status quo. Third, if homosexuality is not to remain a limited issue of minority group disadvantage, heterosexuality needs to be deconstructed as a socially privileged set of practices and identity. Fourth, what homosexuality means for some lesbians and gay men cannot be comprehended unless sexual identity is seen in relation to a sexual politics that problematises gender and dominant values, and aims at the construction of oppositional lifestyles.

Local government lesbian and gay initiatives, in the main, not only ignored the relationship between homosexuality, heterosexuality and gender, they also ignored the political issues surfacing within lesbian and gay communities. Questions of butch and femme, cross-dressing, sado-masochism, for instance, all dimensions of internal gay and

lesbian struggle, were neglected by municipal policies which aimed to treat all homosexual relations equally.

But should such issues have been ignored? How should, and how could, local government have addressed them? These questions reveal the limitations of local government's policy choices. As a bureaucratic structure producing directives, regulations and initiatives, it could mandate, proscribe and facilitate. But, as I suggested above, it could not easily engage in an open, equal process of social change with its local community.

Thus, what I am arguing for, in raising these issues, is a shift of focus: a radical move away from seeing lesbian and gay municipal politics as an issue of minority group disadvantage and personal identity. Homosexuality cannot be dealt with in isolation from a broader sexual politics and this cannot take place within traditional bureaucratic forms. What we therefore need to explore are ways in which local government <u>can</u> engage with how sexual politics is lived, organised and structured.

Municipal politics in the 1990s is not the same as its predecessor a decade ago. People are less optimistic, have lower expectations, and, indeed, they are right to do so. For, as I discussed in chapter seven, the role of local government is in transition. Immense legislative and political changes make it unlikely for the foreseeable future that activists will use local government as an ideological, campaigning arena. In addition, the task of providing services is becoming less central to local councils' work. Instead they are intended to act as

co-ordinator and contractor - facilitating provision by private firms and the voluntary sector. Thus, both routes posed by Bellos, the one she propounds as well as the one rejected, seem to becoming increasingly redundant.

Within this changing framework, I would argue the need exists for a `decentred` approach to local government. So far this thesis has focused on the centre, the formal policy-making apparatus, because, in the main, that was the strategy and approach adopted by lesbian and gay municipal activists. Yet, as I have stated, it was an approach with limitations: limitations, I would argue, which cannot be overcome simply by means of better council reports or improved forms of scrutinising front-line workers. Rather, within a framework which focuses on sexual politics rather than sexual identity, we need an approach that locates change at the municipal interface, in the multifarious interactions of people and resources.

In part, this is a pragmatic argument. Research carried out within the field of sociology of law[1] as well as in the work of academics such as Lipsky (1980) on `street-level` bureaucrats shows that policies (and laws) are not generally effective in changing people's behaviour and even less their attitudes. In chapters three, four and seven, I discussed the problem of opposition to lesbian and gay initiatives from within the council organisation. Without bureaucratic and popular support, even the crudest degree of change requires high levels of coercion. Yet, this is practically impossible to achieve in an area

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[1] See, for example, V. Aubert (1966) for a classical study on this point.

such as lesbian and gay municipal work, and if attempted, would, indeed did, backfire.

However, as well as pragmatic arguments, there are also theoretical and political ones. I have already set out some reasons why a hierarchical, bureaucratic approach to sexual politics is not appropriate. Beyond that, there are also real problems in the notion of `implementing ideology`. Progressive ideologies cannot simply be implemented like any other policy, nor are they best communicated through leaflets, reports and media interviews. Rather, they are affirmed or challenged through practices - the interaction of people with each other, with institutions, and with resources.

Thus, if, instead of privileging council officers as the agents of change, the focus shifted to teachers, volunteers, child care workers, housing office staff, cleaners and librarians; that is, to interactions within schools, community projects, parent-toddler groups, housing offices and libraries, we might have a more realistic and useful perspective on where progressive change within municipal structures can arise. Lipsky (1980:ch. 1) argues that it is <u>these</u> `street-level` interactions which are crucial, because they are often one to one, based on flexible interventions and discretion, and because it is within these relationships that people change.

A strategy that focused on the specificity of different kinds of interactions would also require the contribution or role of management

to vary.[8] Greater responsiveness to particular needs and requirements might therefore be achieved, compared to circumstances where broad guidelines are issued, intended to be as applicable in the housing office as in the community centre or swimming pool. Whilst lesbian and gay municipal policies were responsive to the specificity of particular situations, I would argue too much reliance was placed on the more traditional, policy-oriented strategy, with its emphasis on impersonal interaction, rules and regulations, and the dispersal or shifting of conflict.

An example of this latter approach can be seen in the following illustration. A parent-toddler group, in which women members discussed their dissatisfaction with their partners' contribution to child care, might be deemed not to be implementing its authority's lesbian and gay policy if certain monitoring requirements were not fulfilled or certain books not purchased. Whilst these council requirements may be entirely valid, such policies are problematic when they ignore the kinds of changes that <u>are</u> taking place. For, in doing so, the links between different relations of power are neglected. Instead heterosexism or homophobia are depicted as an autonomous dynamic that can only be eradicated through `head-on collision`.

A decentred strategy, on the other hand, in the case of the above example, would be initiated by community activists, parents, staff or possibly lesbian and gay specialist officers. It would begin by examining the needs of such groups or projects in developing a broad,

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[8] Officers in Manchester's equal opportunities unit suggest that this is one of the present directions of their work.

progressive sexual politics that encompassed issues of class and race as well as gender and sexual orientation. This might include requests for someone to come in and facilitate a discussion, the loan of particular toys or books, changing the times the groups meet, publicity to encourage lesbians to become involved and so on. These requests and recommendations could then be channelled through different decision-making systems, depending on their particular nature. Thus they might get taken up by sympathetic councillors on committees, lesbian and gay officers working in units, departmental staff, or appropriate grass-roots organisations.

But what if such requests were not supported? What if the project was uninterested or even hostile to the idea of developing a progressive sexual politics? Let me take the second question first. If blanket opposition existed, then no change in the short-term would be likely to occur whichever strategy was adopted. However, if there were a few, lone, voices - staff or parents, perhaps - a strategy which encouraged grass-roots involvement might offer the prospect of more constructive and accessible support than an approach which posited local government as the repository of all assistance. Yet I am not suggesting here that the role of municipal support and policies is redundant - not by any means. For in such situations, the existence of council policies would be useful as a resource that advocates of a more progressive approach, such as front-line staff, could draw upon to gain legitimacy and municipal assistance.

Let me now return to my first question: the problem of opposition from within the bureaucracy. A decentred approach might make it easier

to challenge opposition from the council leadership or from senior officers since any proposal which reached them would already have the backing of people at a number of different points and locations. It might also be a more effective strategy in dealing with resistance from front-line workers. By transferring ownership and control of initiatives away from senior management, front line workers would perhaps be more willing to develop initiatives and more prepared to respond to criticisms. I said above that a hierarchical, policy-oriented approach deflects and diffuses conflict since nobody takes responsibility, except possibly those too inaccessible to most complainants. Yet, diffusion of conflict does not mean it disappears. Rather, it allows a build-up of tension and resentment which can then be exploited by right-wing actors as happened in Haringey. Moreover, if the objective is to change attitudes, perspectives, and institutional practices, it is important that conflict is not suppressed, but rather constructively engaged in so that change and progress are possible.

I am here suggesting two things. First, many of the people who opposed lesbian and gay policies might not remain hostile if they were involved and understood what was implicated. But does this assume opposition was solely grounded in ignorance? Whilst, clearly to an extent it was (see chapter five), it is also important not to overestimate the power and impact of knowledge. Many on the right know all the arguments put forward by advocates of lesbian and gay equality, yet still remain unconvinced. Thus, equally important in enabling conflict to lead to productive change is the fact that a decentred strategy would shift the balance of power away from elite actors. In

this way, lesbians and gays as well as progressive groups generally might be more able to assert and enforce their demands.

This second point goes to the crux of my argument. Could a decentred strategy be achieved prior to a shift in the political balance? Why would councils agree to such a project if it was ultimately disempowering for them?[9] It is important to emphasise here that in a sense I am not `addressing` local authorities but rather progressive actors working in this area. Thus, in contrast to arguing for political, managerial or service based decentralisation which depends on local government establishing appropriate structures (P. Hoggett, 1991), this exploration is about political strategy to achieve specific objectives: strategy, which lesbian and gay actors can choose to adopt.

Clearly, the approach I am proposing is not perfect. It is also not particularly novel. Activists have advocated it for decades, and many of the community-based municipal developments of the 1970s were a response to similar perceptions regarding the limitations of the local state. In the 1980s too, many lesbians and gay men tried and to varying degrees succeeded in operationalising a less hierarchical politics. However, I would argue, lesbian and gay municipal politics in the 1980s became too caught up with bureaucratic structures and processes. Perhaps though, this was inevitable. Throughout my thesis, I have indicated the structural constraints on progressive initiatives and the power and impact of state processes and culture. The extent, therefore, to which municipal actors could have `chosen` to construct an

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[9] Although see P. Hoggett (1991) regarding new forms of post-fordist devolved management within the public sector currently.

alternative approach is uncertain. For aside from obvious constraints, the more subtle considerations of socialisation, political judgment and personal interest problematise the very notion of choice.

The desire for policy, committees, reports and officers is also understandable in a structure which accords status to those particular things. Yet, whilst these goals may provide a modicum of legitimacy for lesbians and gay men, this thesis has suggested that such strength was almost entirely symbolic. Few changes occurred within the provision and structuring of local government services as a result of lesbian and gay policies. Whilst changing attitudes and perspectives, I would argue, did take place, these changes were principally amongst those actors directly involved in the political struggle rather than within municipal authorities' broader constituencies.

As the 1990s continue to witness the diminution of local government's role of provider, as relations between local authorities and their communities become ever more complex, progressive attempts to direct change through centralised power will become increasingly unsuccessful.[10] Thus, the need to locate a progressive sexual politics first and foremost in the multiple relationships people have with council structures and practices has become even more imperative.

In this conclusion, I have advocated challenging not only the top-down, but also the centre-periphery model of local government. Yet how far should such a contestation be taken? One could go further and deny first, the unequal distribution of power both within and between local

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[10] See C. Moore (1991).

government and its environment[11] and second, that any separation exists at all between local government and its community. Unfortunately, there is not the space to address this first issue. I do, however, wish to make a few brief points about the relationship between local government and community as this is particularly pertinent to the theoretical perspective adopted in this thesis.

One approach to this relationship is to consider whether there are any criteria which distinguish local authorities from the communities of which they are part. State pay-roll, for example, is not a distinguishing feature of the former, nor are legal constraints. Both apply to bodies and actors traditionally separated from local government. I would argue therefore that the municipal-community interface is not a clear cut distinction but blurred. Where, for example, would one locate voluntary workers in a council funded and run community centre, private companies with tenders to provide public services, or child care workers on a council register? Indeed, it is this lack of clarity which makes a more decentred strategy crucial. Yet, at the same time there are dangers with a thoroughly post-structuralist account which denies any distinction at all.

For, if we are all part of local government or the local state, do such terms then convey any useful meaning? My argument in chapter seven, that local government can legitimately neither deploy ideology instrumentally nor convey oppositional meanings, is grounded in an analysis which distinguishes local government from community activism.

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[11] See Z. Eisenstein (1988:10) on the relationship between power and the state.

Whilst I would reject a functionalist account of local government, at the same time it <u>is</u> expected to perform certain roles and, when it does not do so, as I describe in chapter seven, outside forces step in. I therefore adopt Gramsci's useful, although somewhat confusing, approach which treats civil society as both part of the state, whilst simultaneously as separate from it.[12] At the same time I would suggest that there is a third area - a grey space, a realm of fluidity - which is both state and non-state. This paradox of the state reflects different levels of reality. It reflects the fact that what we see when looking at the local state depends on <u>why</u> we are looking at it. At the same time it assists in developing a strategy.

If progressive, municipal initiatives can be developed within the grey area - at the interface of state and community - then it is possible that the problems identified in this thesis, those of bureaucratic containment and status quo opposition, may be reduced or even thwarted. In the case of lesbian and gay policy development, both kinds of difficulty were able to occur because initiatives entailed the <u>specific</u> utilisation of local state processes. Thus, initiatives developed within the bureaucratic policy-implementation process experienced the consequences of a mobilisation of bias. Those that managed to escape, flying out through chinks in the processes walls, precipitated and encountered tremendous levels of opposition.

Yet, if one develops municipal strategies outside such bureaucratic policy-making processes, containment is less possible. Instead of policies developed for future consumption, where an ostensible

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[12] See W. Adamson (1980:ch. 7); C. Buci-Glucksmann (1980:ch. 3).

separation occurs between means and ends, the two become fused. In this way, there are fewer deep grooved channels through which initiatives flow, through which they can be controlled, contained, watered down and watered out, fewer points at which different permissions are requested and can be refused. Rather, the process of dialogue and interaction is the change.

In addition, since the formal policy-implementation structures of local government are not ostensibly reaching beyond their ideological boundaries, articulating oppositional meanings, and using ideology in an instrumental way, right-wing mobilisation becomes much harder. First, conservative forces cannot point to local government's illegitimate behaviour since the sexual politics is taking place outside formal, political arenas. Secondly, as I have said, there is less likely to be a reservoir of dissatisfaction all focused on the same target, for resentment would be lessened and the targets too dispersed.

At the same time, more lesbian, gay, and other progressive actors would be able to actively participate, rather than a minority or bureaucratic elite. Such a stress on grass-roots intervention, organising discussions in schools and institutional homes, for example, or supporting `out` staff to change oppressive work-place practices, might also reduce the likelihood that those involved would be socialised into bureaucratic ways of working. In addition, the co-optive tendencies on the part of the local state would be lessened. It is much easier to co-opt - socially, ideologically and politically - a few community activists sitting on a council committee than a large

number of people, with varying degrees of involvement and sympathy, working to change a variety of state practices. For these reasons, as well as the greater political heterogeneity that would undoubtedly result from more people being involved who were not council employees, such actors would be less likely to perceive themselves as ideologically constrained by the narrow arena of acceptable municipal practice.

Nothing in what I am saying, however, denies the need for action at a distance from the state (narrowly defined). Many writers and activists have addressed the importance of community organising and grass-roots provision as well as the task of politicising the home, workplace and myriad of other arenas. Similarly, I do not wish to marginalise the importance of bureaucratic change and development. In this thesis, I have explored at the symbolic and practical importance of municipal initiatives in improving conditions for lesbians and gay men. I have also examined the impact of such policies at a national level in precipitating a discursive struggle around issues of sexual politics.[13] Yet, despite the public condemnation of homophobia that lesbian and gay policies produced, I would argue that only a small number of people were significantly affected by the initiatives, principally those directly engaged in local government structures.

Unable to radically transform the ideologies conveyed and reproduced by state apparatuses, lesbian and gay policies functioned amongst the people who advocated them, fought over them, and considered their

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[13] For further discussion of this, see D. Cooper and D. Herman (1992).

relevance to their lives. Even here change was minimal. Whilst no doubt the attitudes of some people changed and perhaps the practices of a smaller number, the sexed and gendered nature of local government as a state bureaucracy did not undergo a significant transition. From the articulation of power and sexuality in relations between white clerical female staff and management, to housing policies which discriminate against lesbians and gays for their lack of marital status and perceived promiscuity, and to the unwillingness of most social workers to consider homosexuals as adoptive parents on the grounds that the courts will reject them, we are witness to the deeply entrenched and entwined nature of a dominant sexual politics.

It is therefore impossible to pose <u>one</u> correct answer, the right strategy that so far has been overlooked. The decentred strategy proposed in this final chapter thus needs to be seen within the context of a plurality of approaches. For we cannot know in advance the potential or effect particular strategies might possess. Nothing is that predictable. Moreover, the interconnected but still fragmented nature of our environment means one approach is never sufficient. Today, municipal sexual politics is in a state of flux. What happens tomorrow depends, but cannot be determined, by the actions of progressive actors, responding to the circumstances that meet them, with approaches based on competing and undoubtedly conflicting interpretations of the past.

APPENDIX A.

LESBIAN AND GAY MUNICIPAL EQUALITY STRUCTURES, 1979-87

AUTHORITY	COMMITTEE STRUCTURE	NO. OF OFFICERS	UNIT STRUCTURE
Camden	Lesbian and Gay (Full) Committee 1/3 Co-optees (none in effect)	four	Lesbian and Gay Unit
GLC	Gay Working Party Sub-Groups Majority Co-options	---	---
Haringey	Lesbian and Gay Sub-Committee (Reporting to Community Affairs Committee) Majority Co-optees	six	Lesbian and Gay Unit
Islington	Gay and Lesbian Advisory Working Party Gay and Lesbian Sub-Committee (Reporting to Policy and Resources Committee) Co-optee numbers and representation variable	---	---
Lambeth	Lesbian and Gay Working Party (Reporting to Policy and Resources Committee) Majority Co-optees	---	---
Nottingham	Gay and Lesbian Sub-Committee Gay Mens' Sub-Committee Lesbian Sub-Committee (Reporting to Equal Opportunities Committee) Majority Co-optees	two job-shares one lesbian one gay man	Equal Opportunities Unit

LESBIAN AND GAY MUNICIPAL EQUALITY STRUCTURES, 1979-87

AUTHORITY	COMMITTEE STRUCTURE	NO. OF OFFICERS	UNIT STRUCTURE
Manchester	Lesbian and Gay Sub-Committee (Reporting to Equal Opportunities Committee) Majority Co-optees	four two lesbians two gay men	Equal Opportunities Unit
Southampton	Standing Advisory Committee on Lesbian and Gay Rights (Reporting to Equal Opportunities Committee) Majority Co-optees	---	---

For a more detailed table of lesbian and gay municipal structures in London boroughs, including proposed developments post-1987, see Capital Gay, 28 August 1987

Appendix B: Interviews (conducted 1990-1991)

[positions given are those interviewees held during period of study]

Manchester City Council

Paul Fairweather, Gay Men's Officer

Paul Hinshaw, Gay Men's Officer

John Nicholson, Labour Councillor, Member Gay Men's Sub-Committee

Chris Root, Lesbian Officer

Marilyn Taylor, Labour Councillor, Member Equal Opportunities Committee

Nottingham City Council

Jo Fraser, Equal Opportunities Officer (Lesbian)

Harry Joshua, Co-ordinator Equal Opportunities Unit

Richard McCance, Labour Councillor, Chair Gay and Lesbian Sub-Committee

Camden Borough Council

Emmy Doye, Lesbian Co-optee Camden Women's Committee

Sandra Plummer, Labour Councillor, Chair Lesbian and Gay Committee

Jane Skeates, Lesbian and Gay Officer, Lesbian and Gay Research Project Worker

Haringey Borough Council

Ron Bell, Conservative Councillor, Member Lesbian and Gay Sub-Committee

Vince Gillespie, Labour Councillor, Chair Lesbian and Gay Sub-Committee, Member of Positive Images

Bernie Grant, Labour Councillor, Leader of Council

Bob Harris, Labour Councillor, Chair Education Committee, Member Lesbian and Gay Sub-Committee

Savi Hensman, Co-optee Lesbian and Gay Sub-Committee, Member Positive Images, Member Haringey Black Action

Steve King, Labour Councillor, Deputy and Leader of Council

Soreh Levy, Lesbian and Gay Officer (Policy)

Femi Otitojou, Lesbian and Gay Officer (Training)

Islington Borough Council

Paul Barnett, Arts and Grants Officer

Bob Crossman, Labour Councillor, Mayor, Chair Gay and Lesbian Sub-Committee

David Dawson, Co-optee Gay and Lesbian Sub-Committee

Stan Marshall, Borough Librarian

Lambeth Borough Council

Linda Bellos, Leader

Esther Leeves, Labour Councillor, Member Lesbian and Gay Working Party

Graham Nicholas, Labour Councillor, Chair Lesbian and Gay Working Party

Rachel Webb, Labour Councillor, Member Lesbian and Gay Working Party

Others

Linda Arch, Member of Positive Images

Debby Epstein, Birmingham Labour Party

Patrick Hall, Chair Leeds NALGO Equal Opportunities Committee

Ellen Kelly, Edinburgh Women's Unit

Ken Livingstone, Leader GLC

Anne Matthews, Leader Southwark Council

Margaret McGregor, Chair Edinburgh Women's Committee

Jan Parker, ALA Lesbian and Gay Officer, GLC Women's Officer

Sheila Rushforth, Birmingham City Council Women's Officer

Peter Tatchell, Lesbian and Gay Activist, Labour Party PPC (Bermondsey)

Lorraine Trenchard, Lesbian and Gay Officer (Ealing, Camden)

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Gay Left

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